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Great English Churchmen Series

EDITED BY SIDNEY DARK

ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

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ST. MARY'S COLLEGE CAL.

ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY

BY

SIDNEY DARK

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF THE RENAISSANCE"
"QUEEN ELIZABETH," ETC. ETC.

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GENERAL PREFACE

THE intention of this series of studies of the lives of English bishops and priests is to suggest the significance of the man in the age in which he lived and in the movements within the Church with which he was concerned. It is the general editorial policy to select a biographer sympathetic with the character with whom he deals, since, in the view of the editor, sympathy is necessary to understanding. The choice of subjects is entirely arbitrary, following no chronological order and no settled plan, and the writers represent every school of thought in the English Church. Each volume is individual, and the writer alone is responsible for its judgements.

INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to write impartial history unless the writer is content to be a bore. That was proved by Dr. Creighton in his *History of the Papacy*, in which the evident endeavour to hold the scales fairly resulted in a work as dull as it is learned. Froude, on the other hand, whose partisanship urged him to constant suppression of uncomfortable facts, is none the less always good to read.

Judgements of the past are for most men necessarily coloured by the prejudices of the present. And if this is true in secular affairs, it is still more true in matters of religion. We judge the Middle Ages according as we estimate the great religious cleavage of the sixteenth century. It is impossible to accept Luther and Calvin at their general Protestant value without, as it seems to me, vastly exaggerating that corruption of religion

which they are said to have cleansed. On the other hand, it must be freely admitted that to regard the Reformation, as I do, as almost an unqualified calamity, the evil consequences of which have not yet been exhausted, is almost inevitably to over-estimate the splendour and to under-estimate the squalor of the ages that preceded it. I do not think that the truth about the Middle Ages is to be found half-way between the gloom of Professor Coulton and the gaiety of Mr. Chesterton. I think that they are both right. I am persuaded that England in the Middle Ages was both merry and barbarous and beastly, just as England in the twentieth century is merry and barbarous and beastly.

Prejudice affects the estimate of the individual just as it affects the impression of an age, and judgement of pre-Reformation Churchmen is enormously coloured by the idea of the nature of the Church. If the Church is Holy Church, then Thomas Becket is necessarily a martyr. If the Church is a mere institution that had in the twelfth century lost any real sense of its primitive message and had grown diseased, waiting for

the purging of the Reformation, then Thomas Becket was either a lunatic or an offensive hypocrite. My own point of view, or I should perhaps say, my own prejudice, is very evident. I make no claim to inhuman impartiality. Becket is to me a heroic figure whose life and death were of inestimable service to the Church which he loved and served, and the object of this book is to prove that this judgement squares with the facts and that no other judgement can be maintained if all the facts are considered.

I have continually referred to the authorities to whom I am indebted in the text of the narrative, and it will be seen that I have, so far as possible, relied on writers generally hostile to Becket and impatient of his view of the Church's mission. But I must add a special word of acknowledgement to my friend the Dean of Winchester, whose two books, and particularly his transcription from the contemporary biographers, I have found invaluable.

SIDNEY DARK.

Savile Club,
November 1926.

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CHAPTER I

THE PRELUDE TO THE DRAMA

St. Thomas of Canterbury was murdered in 1170. St. Francis of Assisi was born in 1181. The great era of mediæval civilisation is generally regarded as beginning with St. Francis and the thirteenth century. But the darkness of the Dark Ages, of what Mr. G. K. Chesterton has finely called " the period of penance ", had passed into the half light that heralded the morn two centuries before St. Francis and the *jongleurs de Dieu* taught the world the chivalry of goodness. The eleventh and twelfth centuries were a time of preparation. Ecclesiastically Hildebrand is the great figure of the eleventh century and St. Thomas of the twelfth. The Archbishop was the pupil of the Pope. Thomas died for the doctrine that Hildebrand had preached.

Before Hildebrand ascended the papal throne in 1073 as Gregory VII., he had played a leading part in establishing the law that the

Pope should be elected by the College of Cardinals and not theoretically nominated by the Roman people as had been the custom hitherto, and it was in the early days of his pontificate that there occurred the famous quarrel between the Pope and the Emperor Henry IV. It is necessary to know something of this contest between the secular and the spiritual powers nearly a century before Thomas Becket became Archbishop of Canterbury, since the quarrel between Gregory and Henry IV. was the prelude to the quarrel between Thomas and Henry II. of England.

In the early years of the eleventh century the German emperors were masters of Rome. Henry III., the father of Henry IV., deposed three popes, no man saying him nay. The removal of the right of election from the Roman nobility to the College of Cardinals, however, brought to an end a system under which it was the Emperor who really decided who should sit on the papal throne, and Gregory was determined that lesser ecclesiastical appointments should also be taken out of his hands. In the complicated feudal system, bishops and abbots often held their lands as the vassals of a suzerain lord, compounding for the military service demanded from lay vassals. It was the habit, too, of

the pious to endow monasteries and churches on the condition that they held the patronage. And, in one way and another, the noble, the prince and the emperor claimed the right of ecclesiastical investiture which in effect meant the right of nomination to the offices of the Church. This lay patronage naturally led to simony, and it was the fashion for rich abbeys and attractive bishoprics to be sold to the highest bidder, to the scandal of the faithful and the hindrance of the work of the Church.

Pope Gregory VII. was a reformer of zeal and sincerity. He had an exalted idea of the Church's mission, and his ambition as Pope was to render it worthy to perform that mission. Its enemies were insistent, its difficulties were many, and without character there could be no power to conquer. Gregory's determination to recover for the Church the right of electing her own officers was due, not to the comparatively mean ambition to make the Pope greater than the Emperor, but to the conviction that the Church must possess officers of piety and capacity, or be lost in the welter of the world. So he insisted on clerical celibacy and generally on the maintenance by the clergy of a high standard of living. Hildebrand had spent many months at Cluny, that great monastic home of high

ideals, and Pope Gregory never forgot what Hildebrand had learned.

It was the question of investiture that brought Gregory into sharp conflict with Henry IV. In the year 1075, Henry took it on himself to nominate an Archbishop of Milan. Gregory sent him a roughly worded reprimand from Rome, and the Emperor replied by convening a national council at Worms. The council condemned the Pope's action, and Henry declared that Gregory was deposed and called on the Cardinals to elect a successor. Here was the boldest of re-affirmations of the right of a lay prince to regard the Church as subject to his will. Gregory responded as boldly. He promptly formally excommunicated the Emperor and absolved his subjects from their allegiance. The Emperor had deposed the Pope, the Pope had excommunicated the Emperor—and the quarrel was decided by the will of the people. For which would they have the greater regard, the heavy hand of the Emperor or the ghostly power of the Church? The result was never in doubt. There was a shudder of horror all through the country when news of the excommunication reached Germany. The Emperor found he could no longer count on the princes. Bishops who had been his

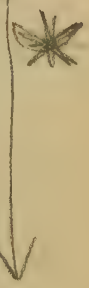
creatures hastened to affirm their loyalty to the Pope. Little as the mass of the people mattered, there could be no question of their feeling. And Henry, who did not lack astuteness, realised that he must make submission to Gregory or lose his throne. So he journeyed to Canossa.

It is said that the story of his waiting barefoot in the snow in the castle courtyard for three days, clad as a penitent and begging to be allowed to make his submission, is a mere legend, nothing more than monkish romance. No one, however, doubts the details of the penitence of Henry II. at Canterbury, which was every bit as uncomfortable as the penance of Henry IV. at Canossa, and there is to me nothing incredible in the story as it is generally told. As Mr. Chesterton says: "Catholics of that age were driven by two dominant thoughts: the all-importance of penitence as an answer to sin and the all-importance of vivid and evident external acts as a proof of penitence". It was a political necessity for Henry IV. to convince his subjects that he was penitent, and he would therefore be eager that the proof should be vivid and evident even at the price of considerable discomfort. At least it is certain that he rode to Canossa and knelt at the feet of the Pope,

and that he received absolution. "No historical act", says Mr. A. W. Holland, "has more profoundly impressed the imagination of the western world." It is true that Henry IV. had his revenge. It is true that in his last years the Pope appeared to have lost much of what he had gained. But the loss was more apparent than real. After Canossa there was for centuries at least a partial acceptance throughout Christendom of the papal assertion of the divinely endowed power of Christ's vicegerent on earth to depose recalcitrant sovereigns and to release their subjects from their obedience. The claim has long ago been abandoned, but it was a matter of vast concern in the eleventh century to compel the recognition of the Church as a divine institution, independent of princes and demanding their allegiance, and of the fact that, in consequence, the Pope, as the head of the Church, held a position far above that of emperor and king. The Church as Gregory saw it was international and self-governing. Its independence was essential to its loyalty to Christ. Its supreme position gave its ministers certain necessary privileges. They were men dowered with mystical and ghostly power and authority, the servants of a great international society and not to be

subject to mere national law. But as has been said, Hildebrand insisted that the exalted and divinely protected situation of the Church's ministers demanded sacrifice and the abandonment of merely human joy. With the enthusiasm of a great personality, he strove to make the Church worthy of her Lord and of the authority that He had given to her and to her ministers.

When, much against his will, Thomas Becket became Archbishop of Canterbury, he at once made it clear that to him the Church was exactly what Gregory had declared that it was. He died in his cathedral because, holding the faith of Gregory, it was simply impossible for him to make concessions in order to placate an earthly king or to surrender any of the rights of the Church which, as he believed, he had been commissioned by God to defend.



The " proud priest " has become a figure for ridicule and contempt. A generation without faith cannot conceive any man, not qualified for a lunatic asylum, dying for his faith. The martyr is nowadays regarded as a properly punished criminal. To Froude, St. Thomas received rather less than his deserts, and Froude's admiration for the king who killed an archbishop is only to be com-

pared to the admiration of the Jacobins for all men who had killed a king. Froude fills his pages with the account of the misdeeds of prelates and priests. "When Becket declared war on the state", he says, "the Church from the Vatican to the smallest archdeaconry was saturated with venality." It is always easy to find more or less satisfactory evidence for denunciations of the past. Abuses have existed in every generation, but they have never existed alone. What a woeful picture of modern England could be painted if no other evidence was considered but the articles in the Hearst press and Mr. Belloc's bitter Jeremiads. But half truths are the most pernicious of lies. In the eleventh century Gregory's reforms were followed immediately by the First Crusade, perhaps the most magnificently idealistic adventure in history. The Church had been cleansed and rejuvenated and it at once turned to heroic achievement. Mr. H. G. Wells, who cannot well be accused of religious prejudice, supplies a suggestive comment on Froude's diatribes when he writes :

> The period from the time of Gregory VII. onward for a century and a half was the great period of ambition and effort for the Church, there was a real sustained attempt to unite all Christendom under a purified and re-organised Church.

Service was the ambition of this " purified and re-organised church ".

Among the most efficient prelates during Gregory's pontificate was the Italian Lanfranc who, on the urging of William the Conqueror, came from the scholastic seclusion of the Abbey of Bec where he had a future Pope among his pupils, to be Archbishop of Canterbury. The Norman Conquest was a good thing for the English people, and an even better thing for the English Church. The last of the Saxon kings was a saint, but the English Church at his death, detached from the life of the Continent, had grown ill-disciplined and indifferent. Lanfranc was among the most desirable aliens who have made England their home. By establishing the supremacy of the See of Canterbury he saved the Church from disruption. He encouraged monasticism, the spread of which had been bitterly opposed by Harold and his father Earl Godwin, and, following the precept of Gregory, enforced celibacy on the secular clergy. He established synodical government in the Church and obtained the king's consent to the separation of the ecclesiastical and secular courts. He gave the highest places in the Church to Normans, but considering the fact that the Saxon clergy were

notoriously ill-educated, inexperienced and narrow-visioned, this of itself was a notable service to England. And, notwithstanding this considered policy, in the use of his patronage, he gained the confidence of the Saxon people to such a degree that he was able continually to play the part of mediator between them and their conquerors, and in this way materially to hasten the welding together of the two peoples into one nation.

Lanfranc died in 1089. Seventy-three years later Thomas sat in the seat of St. Augustine. Much had happened during those years. St. Anselm, another Italian, one of Lanfranc's pupils at Bec and afterwards its Abbot, was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109. During his short reign William Rufus had set himself, with the enthusiastic support of the barons, to the robbery of the Church, and Anselm, though he was a scholar—he has been described as the first of the scholastic theologians—rather than a man of affairs, followed Gregory and anticipated St. Thomas in his resistance to the royal policy and in his stand for the complete independence of the Church from secular interference. The result was that he, again anticipating St. Thomas, spent a large part of his primacy in exile on the

Continent. William Rufus was killed in 1100, and the English crown was seized by his younger brother Henry. The barons supported the claim of the elder brother Robert, Duke of Normandy, and Henry was compelled to turn for support to the Church and to the English people, a suggestive and very common combination. He made peace with Anselm, who proved an invaluable ally for, like Lanfranc, he had won the confidence of the Saxons as well as of the Norman traders who had settled in the English cities. It was probably at Anselm's suggestion that Henry secured the goodwill of the Saxons by a marriage with the Saxon princess, Matilda, niece of Edgar Ætheling, and it was the Archbishop, himself, who set the crown on Matilda's brow.

It is enormously important in considering the character of the Church in the period preceding the age of St. Francis, and in estimating the value of the sneers of Froude and his imitators, to note that Archbishop after Archbishop was the champion of the people against the barons, that Archbishop after Archbishop, Norman by birth, was the defender of the Saxons against the Norman oppressor, and that it was due to the influence of the Church that the fusion of the two

peoples was so rapid that at the accession of Henry I.—I quote Green—" the descendants of the victors of Senlac boasted themselves to be Englishmen ". It was the Church that played the chief part in the making of the nation.

In the anarchy of the reign of Stephen, the reign of law established by Henry I. temporarily came to an end. The barons regained much of their power and the Church lost some of its influence for good—but not all. Thanks to some extent to the enthusiasm aroused by the Crusaders, a great religious movement began in England in the first half of the twelfth century. It was after his return from the Holy Land that Rahere, the light-hearted courtier of Henry I., founded the priory of St. Bartholomew and gave his life to his God. Other great churches, including the Cathedral of St. Paul, were built in London at the same time, and both from the buildings themselves, and from the lives of their founders and ministers, the English people learned something of the beauty of holiness. Against Froude I quote Green who declares that the great churchmen of the twelfth century " derived whatever might they possessed from sheer holiness of life and unselfishness of aim ".

The Church in the twelfth century was eminently practical. It was busy with creation, while princes and barons were busy with destruction. It was working with ploughshare and scythe, while they were playing at soldiers. The foundation of the Cistercians in 1098 was an event of parallel importance to the foundation of the Franciscans in 1209 and it is good to know that the Cistercians owed much of their early success to the Englishman, Stephen Harding, who was abbot of the mother house at Citeaux from 1109 to 1134, and who admitted the famous St. Bernard to the order. The Cistercians have been well called "the great preachers of labour". They were the first farmers of their age. Living a life of great austerity and never neglectful of their choir duties, they found time to teach the peasantry to plough, to tend sheep and to breed horses. The lay brothers were experts whose influence spread all through rural England. The great English wool exporting industry, the beginning of the nation's commercial prosperity, was entirely the creation of the Cistercian monks.

Their first English home was established at Furness in 1127. A hundred others had been established when Thomas Becket became

Archbishop of Canterbury, and in a fine spirit of adventure these pioneers, in their grey habits, set off to conquer not in the smiling south but in the desolate north and in the waterlogged fens. In her *Henry the Second*, Mrs. J. R. Green says :

> We may gain some faint idea of the amazing stir and industry which the founding of those monasteries implied by following in our modern farms and pasture lands the traces which may even now be seen of the toil of these great preachers of labour. The whole water-supply of a countryside for miles round was gathered up by vast drainage works ; stagnant pools were transformed into running waters closed in by embankments, which still serve as ditches for the modern farmer ; swamps were reclaimed that are only now preserved for cultivation by maintaining the dykes and channels first cut by mediæval monks ; mills rose on the banks of the newly-created streams ; roads were made by which the corn of surrounding villages might be carried to the central mill and the produce of the land brought to the central storehouse.

But even this does not tell the whole story. The monasteries and priories were the rivals in beauty of the new city churches, and with their barns and chapels and hospitals were the outposts of civilisation in a world emerging from darkness. Thanks to the monks, the English people were too busy to bother much whether Stephen or the Empress Matilda was the sovereign of their land. The

community life of the monks was an encouragement to the growth of the idea of common interest and a communal life among the peasants. The commoners of the English countryside actually held the common lands in common. Where the monks were landlords they were good landlords. In later centuries there may have been decadence in their relations with their tenants as well as in their relations with their God. Professor Coulton may be right when he denounces the landlord monk and Cobbett may have been wrong when he eulogised him. But thoroughly to understand why St. Thomas died in Canterbury Cathedral it must be realised that the landlord monks of the age of St. Thomas never evicted their tenants, and were often content with a peppercorn rent.

While the Cistercians were civilising rural England, another great movement was taking place in the towns. The municipal guilds, the societies of men who bought and sold, date from the Saxons. The craft guilds, the associations of men who created, first appeared in England in the early years of the twelfth century. The objects of the craft guilds were to protect the interests of the craftsmen and to maintain craftsmanship

at a high level of excellence. They made regulations for the hours of labour, for wages, for the membership of and admission to the various industries. The members of the guilds were compelled to make regular payments into a common fund used for the common guild. As Mr. Chesterton has said:

> The aim of the Guild charities was the same as the aim of the Common Land. It was to resist inequality—or, as some earnest old gentlemen of the last generation would probably put it, to resist evolution. It was to ensure, not only that bricklaying should survive and succeed, but that every bricklayer should survive and succeed. It sought to rebuild the ruins of any bricklayer, and to give any faded whitewasher a new white coat. It was the whole aim of the Guilds to cobble their cobblers like their shoes and clout their clothiers with their clothes; to strengthen the weakest link, or go after the hundredth sheep; in short, to keep the row of little shops unbroken like a line of battle.

The craft guilds were definitely religious in their constitution. Their members were required to attend Mass together and to take part together in religious pageants and festivals. In his *The Parish Guilds of Mediæval England*, Canon Westlake writes of one of these guilds:

> The craft-gild of weavers at Lincoln, which received a charter from Henry II. in 1157, was in its religious aspect a fraternity of the Exaltation of the

Cross, though it does not appear as such till 1346. It provided a great candle before the "high cross in the body of the mother church of Lincoln", which was renewed yearly, brought thereto in a solemn procession. Like most of the gilds of Lincoln, it made ordinances for such brethren as desired to go on pilgrimage. Such ordinances may be illustrated from the Rule of the gild of St. Anne in the parish of St. Peter at the Skinmarket. A brother who would make pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Rome, or St. James, must first of all surrender any gild property he may have in his hands. On his setting out the brethren lead him as far as the Cross on Lincoln Green, and there the Graceman, as the masters of the gilds of Lincoln were called, gives him 2d., the two wardens 1d., and every gild brother ½d. On his return he is met at the same place and conducted with joy and honour to the cathedral church and thence to his home.

A large part of the guilds' revenues was spent in the service of the Church, and this was the excuse for the spoliation in the sixteenth century, the sequel to the spoliation of the monasteries. The nature of the guilds is clearly indicated by the order to Thomas Cromwell's band of thieves to appropriate all revenues hitherto used for "the finding, maintaining, or sustentation of any priest or any anniversary or obit lamp light or other such things".

During the hundred years from the beginning of the reign of Gregory in 1073 to

the death of Becket in 1170, while the Church had struggled successfully to establish its freedom from the control of secular powers, it had been equally busy using its influence in the service of the humble. It is said that at the end of the twelfth century the world was in a state of tumult and confusion, and the Church was in urgent need of reform and re-invigoration. But the world is always in confusion, and the Church always needs reformers. It is not possible to exaggerate the services of the saint of Assisi to the world and the Church. But it would not have been possible for St. Francis to have served the world so well but for the courageous and far-sighted support of the Church. There might have been a St. Francis, but there certainly would have been no Franciscans but for Innocent III., and Innocent, who with full justification excommunicated King John, owed his unchallenged authority, used by him to clear the road before the bare feet of the Little Brothers of the Poor, to the principle for which Becket died, and which largely owed its power and its acceptance to his martyrdom. It was the purpose of Innocent III., says Fr. Cuthbert, "to create a theocracy of the Christian nations under whose sway the Gospel would be better realised in

all spheres of the world's life ". The Pope was the patron of St. Francis, and the more effective patron because of the life and death of St. Thomas.

CHAPTER II

THOMAS THE CLERK

THOMAS BECKET was born in Cheapside on December 21, 1118. His father was a native of Rouen, one of the many Norman merchants who followed the Conqueror and settled in London. He was a man of substance and a freeman of the City. Thomas's mother was also a Norman, born in Caen, and a woman of outstanding piety. Thomas was prouder of his London birth than of his Norman ancestry. He always described himself as " of London ". And his popularity, both in his semi-secular career as chancellor and afterwards as archbishop, was initially due to the fact that he was English. He was indeed the first man born in England to become Archbishop of Canterbury after the Norman Conquest. Even now that would be a distinction, for, as Dr. Hutton has rather wickedly pointed out, of the last eight Archbishops of Canterbury and York, only two were born on English soil of English parents.

Thomas went to school first at Merton in Surrey and afterwards in London and Paris. His holidays were often spent at Pevensey in Sussex with Richer de l'Aigle, a noble friend of his father. There he hunted with hounds and falcons and acquired a passion for the very ornate life of the Norman county gentleman. Both his kindliness and his characteristic eager enterprise were shown when, on one of his visits to Pevensey, he nearly lost his life by plunging into a wide stream to save a favourite hound.

During his brief stay in Paris his mother died and his father lost a great part of his fortune, and when he was twenty-two Thomas entered the service of his kinsman, Osbert Huitdeniers, a wealthy London citizen who, Dr. Hutton suggests, may have been a money-lender, and who was either Sheriff or concerned in some other way with municipal government. Freeman doubts whether Becket was ever a clerk in his relative's counting-house—" No words are used of him which necessarily imply trade "—and it has been suggested that he was actually employed in the Sheriff's office, thus making his first acquaintance with public affairs at the time when the citizens of London were much concerned with the struggle between Stephen

and Matilda, the mother of Henry II., for the crown of England. Mr. Radford says: "To the intellectual training of the schools, and the social advantages of the barons' acquaintance, Thomas now added what was the coping stone of his education, a practical experience of the world of politics".

But this introduction was by no means the "coping stone" of the training of the future Archbishop. That was to be provided much later at Bologna. In these years of his early manhood, Becket lived the ordinary life of a healthy, comparatively well-to-do young Londoner. There is no suggestion that either he or his friends believed that he had any vocation for the priesthood. But neither at this time, nor indeed at any time of his life, is there any hint by his biographers, and some of them are none too friendly, that his life was sexually irregular. He must indeed have been an uncommonly attractive and clever young man. A contemporary describes him:

> Slim of growth and pale of hue, dark of hair, with a long nose and straightly featured face; blithe of countenance was he, winning and loveable in all conversation, frank of speech in his discourse, but slightly stuttering in his talk, so keen of discernment and understanding that he could always make difficult questions plain after a wise manner. Of such wondrously strong memory was he that

whatsoever he had heard of sentences and law-awards he could cite it at any time he chose to give it forth. By reason of these great gifts of God which we have told of even now it was easily understood by wise men that he was predestined to a high station in the church of God.

The men of the twelfth century regarded the Church as the natural career of a brilliant young man of small means and comparatively humble birth. God had given of His bounty, and it was only meet and right that it should be returned to Him in service.

When he was twenty-four, as his friends had anticipated, Thomas passed from the City to the Church, from the Sheriff's office to the Archbishop's household. Theobald, Archbishop since 1138, had, like Lanfranc and Anselm, come to Canterbury from Bec, the famous Normandy monastery which had been intimately associated with the English Church during the reigns of the Norman kings. The monastery was originally founded in 1031 by Herluin, a knight of great reputation, who, in revolt at the grossness of life at the Norman court, determined to forsake the world. With half a dozen companions he began a life of prayer and manual labour in a little hut colony, secluded from the outside world. Eleven years afterwards he was joined by Lanfranc,

who had already gained a great reputation for scholarship in the school at Avranches, and under whose guidance Bec became a prosperous institution, famous for its learning all through Europe, and playing no small part in the establishment of the Hildebrandian idea. Anselm was one of Lanfranc's pupils, and his successor as Prior of Bec in 1064. Theobald became a monk of Bec towards the end of the eleventh century, and its Prior in 1127. Thus of the five archbishops between the Norman Conquest and the elevation of St. Thomas, three came from a monastery the fame of which is only a little less than that of Cluny itself.

Theobald loved peace and the society of learned men. It was his misfortune to live in an age when there was no peace and little taste for learning. He owed his position at Canterbury to Stephen, but he was bold enough to oppose that fatuous king, and he was instrumental in at last making peace between him and Henry of Anjou, and of thus securing the succession for the Anjou prince. Like Gilbert Becket, Theobald was a native of Rouen, and to this his patronage of Gilbert's son was probably due. It has been suggested that conscientious objection to the doubtful methods of the Sheriff's

office drove Thomas from the City to the Archbishop's court at Harrow. His after career makes it reasonable to believe that Thomas's conscience was sensitive even when he was young. But it is foolish to exaggerate the goodness of the good, and it is much more probable that his change of employment was due to the realisation that far greater opportunity for advancement was offered to an able, ambitious young man, with little money or influence, by the Church than by any of the eminently unstable secular authorities of his time. The mediæval Church had no class prejudice in the selection of its leaders. It was not until after the Reformation that the Church in England thought it part of its mission to provide careers for the well-born incompetent.

If service with Theobald was calculated to satisfy Thomas's ambitions, life at the Archbishop's court was extremely delightful to the young scholar. The university was hardly in its embryo stage. There was a law school at Bologna early in the eleventh century, and a hundred years later Abelard began the lectures in Paris that may be roughly regarded as the beginning of its university. But it was not till the beginning of the thirteenth century that Europe saw

the great development of the university system. There were six universities in Europe in 1200 and eighty in 1500, a fact that is, as Dom Bede Jarrett says, eloquent witness both to the desire for knowledge and the patronage of learning of the centuries that preceded the Renaissance—the centuries of piety and faith. When Thomas went to Canterbury, the cathedral schools were the only homes of learning, and the school at Canterbury was particularly interesting and important " a substitute ", in Stubbs' words, " for the as yet undeveloped universities ". Future bishops and archbishops were among Thomas's fellows. Canon law, which as the result of Hildebrand's dogmas and reforms, had become of insistent interest, was taught and discussed. And politics were not forgotten. Thomas acted as one of the Archbishop's secretaries, and was intimately concerned with the tangle of public affairs. Considerable trouble had arisen from the appointment by Pope Innocent II. of Henry of Blois, Bishop of Winchester, and Stephen's brother, as Papal legate. Henry of Blois held the See of Winchester until after Thomas's death, and despite his family connection he lived to be regarded with confidence by Henry II. as a wise and

cautious counsellor. Throughout his long life he generally took a middle course in ecclesiastical controversy, though he was outspoken in his support of Thomas after he returned from exile to await martyrdom. As legate his authority was superior to that of the Primate, and in these years Henry of Winchester did not forget that he was also Henry of Blois. He used his legation authority to the full, continually worrying the Archbishop, probably with greater zest, since Theobald was notoriously no friend of his house.

The position was intolerable for the Archbishop, and, soon after his engagement by Theobald, Thomas was sent to Rome to petition Innocent's successor to withdraw the Bishop of Winchester's delegated authority. The mission was a success. The Pope sided with the Archbishop and, after the short visit to England of a Cardinal Ambassador, Theobald became the legate of the Apostolic See, and the one supreme authority in the Church in England. Thomas's achievement must have increased his master's confidence, and it should be remembered that he was still only twenty-six or twenty-seven.

In 1148, Thomas went with the Archbishop to the council at Rheims called by Pope Eugenius III. The Pope was a

Cistercian, and St. Bernard, the greatest of the Cistercians, was the dominating figure at the council. Among the questions discussed was the appointment of William of Blois, Stephen's nephew, as Archbishop of York. The appointment was entirely uncanonical, a royal interference with the rights of the Church. Fearful that the council would declare it invalid, the king forbade any English prelate to cross the Channel, but Theobald defied the royal order, and contrived to reach Rheims after a stormy and perilous journey, described by Pope Eugenius as "more a swim than a sail". The Council of Rheims declared against William, and Stephen retaliated by confiscating Theobald's property and compelling him to a short exile, which Thomas shared, and part of which was spent in Rome.

For Thomas the council at Rheims was an experience of immense importance. He was thirty, still only in minor orders, and perhaps not yet certain of himself and his convictions. At Rheims, he heard the princes of the Church proclaiming its divine authority and resisting the interference of secular kings. And with the Cardinals sat the saint, Bernard, the greatest of mediæval preachers, aged and broken already by the austerity and ceaseless

activity of his life, the teacher of Christian charity, who emphasised by his service to his fellows the urgent necessity that the Church should preserve its independence and its power.

At Rheims the succession to the English throne was discussed by the Pope and the Archbishop, Thomas being doubtless present at the conferences, and after deliberation the support of the Church was pledged to Henry of Anjou. Shortly afterwards Gilbert Foliot was appointed Bishop of Hereford directly by the Pope, and did homage not to Stephen, but to Henry. For the time, Thomas and Gilbert, fated to be the bitterest of enemies, were in the same camp.

At Rheims, too, Thomas became for the first time familiar with the struggle between the Church and the Sovereign, which was for him to end in martyrdom, and indirectly he began his association with the prince whom he was first to serve and afterwards to defy.

In pursuance of his considered policy to secure the throne for Henry, Theobald declined in 1152 to crown Eustace, Stephen's son, as a sort of joint king with his father. Again the Archbishop was threatened. Again he appealed to Rome for support, Thomas making another visit on his behalf to the

Eternal City. The king's persecution of the Archbishop was followed by papal excommunication and an interdict, and Stephen was compelled to give way. In 1153 Henry landed with an army in England, fought Stephen and the barons who supported him at Malmesbury, and had a personal interview with the king at Wallingford, at which, with a narrow tributary of the Thames between them, terms of peace were discussed. The death of Eustace in the following year made things easier for Henry. Theobald, going even further than Hildebrand, claimed that to the Church "it principally belongs to elect the king", declared for Henry, and compelled Stephen to recognise him as his heir. Stephen died in 1154, and on December 19 of that year, Henry of Anjou was crowned King of England in Winchester Cathedral.

Henry II. was the son of Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, and Matilda, daughter of Henry I. and grand-daughter of the Conqueror, a woman of much ability and with all the characteristic ambition of her family. It was said of her that she had the nature of a man in the frame of a woman. Geoffrey was nine years younger than his wife, a restless, bitter-tongued incompetent, who died when his son was nineteen. The boy had been educated

in a dozen different cities, and was a foreigner to all the peoples of his vast domain. From his father he inherited Anjou, Maine and Touraine. Through his mother he was Duke of Normandy. He was Duke of Aquitaine and suzerain lord of Brittany. With England added to his dominions, he was master of both sides of the English Channel and of the coast of the Continent from the Scheldt to the Pyrenees.

Henry was a man of iron physique, with broad shoulders, red hair, large head and a curiously harsh voice. He inherited from his father an insistent restlessness, and from his mother courage, firmness of purpose and the Norman genius for rule. He was a crafty statesman, knowing nothing of scruples, and a great general who, like most other great generals, preferred to gain his ends by negotiation than by the hazard of battle. He failed in many things, but never in care for his soldiers. His mother was his political mentor, and her teaching was summarised in the admonition, " Glut a hawk with his quarry and he will hunt no more. Show it him and then draw it back, and you will ever keep him tractable and obedient."

Henry was approachable and hated flatterers. He was well-read for a man of his

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day, eager in his conversation, generally indifferent to religion, with intervals of terrified superstition. His nature was cold and cautious, but even kings share human inconsistency, and his determined policy was frequently interrupted by violent fits of passion. He loved order and discipline, and it was this passion that enabled a king who never spoke a word of English, and spent a comparatively short time of his reign on English soil, to become the actual father of English law.

Two years before he ascended the English throne, and when he was only nineteen, Henry married Eleanor of Aquitaine, the divorced wife of Louis VII. of France, a woman eight years his senior. Louis was a feeble king, sadly ineffective, but deeply and sincerely religious, and Eleanor, who combined intelligence with licentiousness—a by no means unusual combination—complained that she had "married a monk and not a king". She was attracted by Henry's masterful masculinity. He at least was a man. From his point of view, the marriage was justified by the territory that it added to his possessions, which made him the most powerful prince in Christendom.

The Norman kings had ruled England

successfully, thanks largely to the intelligent co-operation of the Church. Mrs. Green describes the bishops brought to England by William the Conqueror as " foreign officials trained in the king's chapel ". But this is an entirely misleading description of such an ecclesiastic as Lanfranc, who served the English people every bit as well as he served their Norman king. Order ruled in England so long as a masterful Norman sat on the throne, and the barons, by whose help the Conquest had been achieved and whose fortresses were now to be found all over the country, could be held in check, thanks to the steady support given to the king by the Church, and to the acuteness of the ecclesiastics who were the royal ministers.

Stephen was a usurper. The Church in England resented his seizure of the throne, even though he was recognised as king by Pope Innocent II., in face of the opposition of the majority of the cardinals. But to maintain his position Stephen was bound to truckle to the barons. He was, indeed, little more than their tool, and in consequence, during the nineteen years of his reign, Norman order gave place to chaos, in which the barons degenerated into unhampered freebooters, and the people starved. It was because of the

incompetence that had reduced a great part of the country to ruin and misery that Archbishop Theobald was persistently hostile to the usurper. Because, too, of its sympathy with the troubles of the humble, and of its constant desire for justice and effective secular government, the Church welcomed the coronation of Henry. Without the Church, Henry of Anjou might have conquered England; backed by the Church he ascended the throne peacefully and by right of accession. But though at the time he was doubtless grateful for the steady support of the Archbishop and his fellows, he belonged to a family that had for centuries been engaged in very bitter controversy with the ecclesiastical authorities, and, as I have said, his own religion was intermittent and superficial. The events of the next twenty years were determined by the character of the king and his theory of government. He owed the English throne to the Church, but he soon forgot the obligation. He could not tolerate within his dominions any authority sufficiently powerful to challenge his own. This was not altogether from inability to endure personal rivalry. Henry was intent on establishing a system of government and administration which should ensure order and make for prosperity, and he was

convinced that such a government could not exist unless the sovereign possessed absolute authority over all his subjects, whether they were laymen or clerics. This was no new theory. It was inherited from the Norman kings. It was the theory which led Henry VIII., three hundred years later, to break with the Pope and despoil the monasteries. But it was the theory which the twelfth-century Church, inspired by Hildebrand, was pledged to resist. And Becket must have understood, from the first, what was in the king's mind, and he must have realised the antagonism between his ambition and the demands of the Church militant which he had learned at the council at Rheims.

His services to Theobald had been rewarded by much valuable preferment. While he was still in minor orders he received the living of St. Mary le Strand and of Otford in Kent. He was made Prebendary both of St. Paul's and of Lincoln, and in 1154, the year of Henry's accession, having first been ordained deacon, he was appointed Archdeacon of Canterbury. Thomas has been sharply criticised by Froude and others for the accumulation of pluralities, and for the acceptance of ecclesiastical positions, the duties of which he could not possibly have performed. But

Freeman has provided an adequate defence. He says :

> The average conscience of the time was fully satisfied if the holder of several benefices provided a competent person to do the duties of each. If Thomas did this at Beverley and Otford and wherever else he held preferment, he would not reach the standard either of primitive or of modern morality, but he would fully satisfy the morality of his own age.

In the mediæval Church, the Archdeacon was the administrator of canon law, and the office was of great importance. It was, indeed, due to the bishops' jealousy of the Archdeacons' influence and independence that they established their own courts, which with Chancellors as Judges still exist. After the institution of these courts the importance of the Archdeacon declined. Theobald had long intended that Thomas should be Archdeacon of Canterbury, and with this idea he had studied canon law in the school at Canterbury, and afterwards in the university at Bologna, where a hundred years later Dante was a student. Gratian had published his famous *Decretum*, the textbook of the canons, at Bologna, and the university had become a centre for the inculcation of the doctrines which Hildebrand had laid down. After his stay in Bologna, Thomas remained

for a time at Auxerre, and he returned to England saturated with the theories which he was for a time, apparently, to forget, but for which he was ultimately to die.

In 1151, the politico-ecclesiastical society in the cathedral city of Canterbury received a notable new recruit in the great scholar, John of Salisbury, who was to be Thomas's most intimate friend and biographer. John was a Saxon by race, and had been a pupil of Abelard in Paris, and had afterwards studied in almost every notable school in Europe. He came to Archbishop Theobald with letters of introduction from St. Bernard, and was soon recognised as "the central figure of English learning".

Immediately after his coronation the young king felt the need for an energetic and competent minister. He knew that it would be necessary for him to be away from England for long periods at a time, and he wanted to secure the service of a minister with intelligence enough to understand his policy and capacity enough to carry it out. He naturally turned for advice to the Archbishop, since he was entirely unfamiliar with England, and had little acquaintance with its people. On his side, Theobald was eager to maintain the alliance between monarch and Church.

There was nothing strange in the idea of a servant of the Church becoming a minister of the king. Thomas had had experience of secular administration in a Sheriff's office in the city of London. He had successfully performed delicate diplomatic missions in Rome. He was personally acquainted with the great figures of the religious world. He was known to the king, who would certainly be prejudiced in his favour by the fact that he had been present at the Rheims conference, at which the Church had determined that Henry should mount the English throne. It must have been with something of a wrench that the Archbishop suggested that his most capable and attractive subordinate should leave his service. But while serving the king it would be possible for Thomas to render invaluable service to the Church, and, at the same time, to save the English from being treated as a conquered people. So the recommendation was made, and early in 1155 Thomas of London became Chancellor of England. Gilbert Foliot afterwards accused him of having bought the chancellorship as a step towards the primacy. There was nothing unusual in the purchase of high office in the Middle Ages, and there are many recorded instances of both secular and

ecclesiastical positions being purchased from needy kings. But the charge in this case is probably untrue. As Mr. Radford points out, the chancellorship had never before been the stepping-stone to the primacy, and there is contemporary evidence that Thomas was by no means eager for the position, and that at the beginning he found it almost intolerable. One of the chroniclers writes :

> Hence it is written that he prayed the archbishop Theobald, often times with tears, that he might be taken back into his service, so as to withdraw his neck from under the yoke of the thraldom of standing between the Church and the king's men. This, however, the archbishop could not grant him, saying that, by the spiritual reward which awaited him, he was the more needed for the Church the heavier the trials were that he must needs endure.

CHAPTER III

THOMAS THE CHANCELLOR

HENRY spent Christmas 1154 at Bermondsey, and in January 1155 he began a progress through the north and the midlands, nowhere meeting any opposition. Things went less smoothly in the west, where strong measures had to be taken to persuade certain of the feudal lords that the reign of law and order had begun again in England.

Henry remained in England until January 1156. He returned in April 1157 for sixteen months, and then he went back to the Continent. During the first four years of his reign, Henry was in England for only two and a half years, and, in that short time, he contrived root and branch re-organisation and reform. Mrs. J. R. Green says :

> It was only by the most arduous labour, by travel, by readiness of access to all men, by inexhaustible patience in weighing complaint and criticism, that he learned how the law actually worked in the

remotest corners of his land. He was scarcely ever a week in the same place ; his life in England was spent in continual progresses from south to north, from east to west. The journeyings by rough track-ways through " desert " and swamp and forest, through the bleak moorlands of the Pennine Hills, or the thickets and fens that choked the lower grounds, proved indeed a sore trial for the temper of his courtiers ; and bitter were the complaints of the hardships that fell to the lot of the disorderly train that swept after the king, the army of secretaries and lawyers, the mail-clad knights and barons followed by their retainers, the archbishop and his household, bishops and abbots and judges and suitors, with the " actors, singers, dicers, confectioners, huxters, gamblers, buffoons, barbers ", who diligently followed the court.

Courtiers grumbled, but the barons were overawed, and the people impressed by an entirely novel idea of kingship :

> A new sense of law and justice grew up under a sovereign who himself journeyed through the length and breadth of the land, subduing the unruly, hearing pleas, revising unjust sentences, drawing up charters with his own hand, setting the machinery of government to work from end to end of England. More than this, the king himself had learned to know his people.

Thomas the Chancellor was always with the king, and at least as busy as his master. His duties were many, though his privileges were great. He was the king's chaplain. He received and controlled the revenues of

vacant bishoprics. He had to prepare and seal the innumerable charters that Henry granted on his journeys. Henry's extreme energy and brusque methods often made the Chancellor's position infinitely difficult. He was the natural go-between, and men, fearful of the master, vented their resentment on the man. When the king was out of the country the Chancellor's responsibilities were naturally greater. Few men, indeed, can ever have lived more strenuous lives than Henry II.'s Chancellor.

He was one of the judges of the *Curia Regis*, which, with or without the king, sat as the final court of appeal. At times, too, he held the king's courts in various parts of the country, anticipating the system of circuit courts set up by Henry after Thomas had ceased to be Chancellor. During his chancellorship, indeed, he worked out the preliminary details of the legal reforms which were the great permanent achievement of Henry's reign. "Henry showed in after times", says Freeman, "that he could go on with the work by himself, but it was while Thomas was at his side that it began."

Finance was another of the Chancellor's responsibilities. It was his business to check the Sheriffs' accounts, and to secure necessary

funds for the royal treasury. He is said to have suggested the system of scutage, which enabled feudal tenants to buy themselves out of the obligation of military service, and which was resorted to in the early years of Henry's reign. But the system was known in the previous century, and was only revived by Becket.

The Chancellor was his master's foreign secretary, and sometimes his ambassador. In 1158 he was busy with delicate negotiations with Louis of France, the object of which was to secure the recognition of Henry's overlordship of Brittany. In France, Henry was nominally the French king's vassal, and no man was more punctilious in the regard of the letter of feudal law. But he had no respect for its spirit. He was ready to acknowledge suzerainty so long as it was a shadow. Louis was not a difficult adversary, and, during his visit to Paris, Thomas, who had learnt the art of diplomacy in Rome, was able to obtain all that his master desired. An alliance between the kings was effected by the arrangement of a marriage between Henry's son and Louis's daughter, both little more than babies, and the king of France acceded to all the demands of his masterful vassal. Subsequently Henry led

Louis in a sort of triumph through Normandy and Brittany, as is recorded by one of Thomas's secretaries, "not now as a vassal requiring help, but with all the pomp of an equal king".

In these crowded years Thomas was not content merely to be Lord Chancellor, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Minister, Ambassador and Home Secretary. On occasion the man of peace became the man of war, and the churchman put on the armour of the soldier. On his road home from Paris in 1158 he attacked and captured a notorious bandit, and he was the moving spirit in Henry's expedition against Toulouse in 1159. Henry claimed Toulouse as part of his wife's dowry, but the city had been seized by Count Raymond of St. Giles, with the support of the French king. The Chancellor rode with the royal army at the head of seven hundred magnificently equipped knights, but his martial ardour was sadly disappointed. Louis had, himself, hurried south to hold Toulouse in person, and, again recognising feudal obligations, Henry declined to wage open war on his lord. Thomas had no patience with such scruples. He was a churchman to whom all princes were the same. He was the son of a merchant, im-

patient of the niceties of feudalism. He was, for the time, a soldier, and he resented the loss of the opportunity to prove that there was no limit to his versatility. But Henry was firm, and the incident has its importance as the first serious difference between the king and his minister. There may have been some small consolation for the warlike clerk in the reduction of neighbouring cities, in the storming of which he played a vigorous part, appropriately garbed in helmet and cuirass, and he was left in command of the army when the king went north.

A second campaign on the Norman frontier gave Thomas another opportunity to exhibit his military prowess. At his own expense he fitted out a contingent that amounted to 6000 of all ranks, whom he led into battle, unhorsing knights and performing many deeds of derring do. A friendly biographer writes :

> Who can tell how many suffered death at his hands, how many the loss of all their wealth ? Surrounded by a valiant body of knights, he attacked whole states, destroyed cities and towns, gave villages and farms to the greedy flames without one thought of pity, and proved merciless to the enemies of his lord the king, in whatever quarter they rose.

All this happened in 1159. Three years afterwards, Thomas was Archbishop. All

men are inconsistent, and most of the inconsistencies of Becket's career over which critics of the type of Froude have gloated, seem to me human and perfectly easy to understand. But the military enthusiasm of 1159 is undoubtedly perplexing. Becket was not the first or the last churchman to play the soldier. Nearly five hundred years later Richelieu put on armour and directed the siege of Rochelle. But Becket was not Richelieu, and no one has ever suggested that the French cardinal should be numbered with the saints. It would seem that Becket was the victim of his own thoroughness. He could never under-do anything, but he sometimes over-did. In the few weeks that he was a soldier, he was nothing but a soldier, fierce, energetic, intent on gaining military advantage, just as during the years when he was an archbishop, he was nothing but an archbishop—austere, devoted, caring for nothing except the Church that had been committed to his care.

The Chancellor's daily life was marked by a lavish magnificence and a prodigal generosity. In a literal sense he kept open house. Every day princes from the Continent with their army of attendants, or earls and barons with their knights, were entertained by the king's minister. It was his duty to receive

foreign missions, and to impress them with the wealth and greatness of his country by gorgeous entertainment. If Thomas anticipated the splendour of Wolsey when he was at home, he was a still more dazzling figure on his travels with his glittering retinue of knights. Two hundred members of his household, of various ranks and degrees, rode with him on his journey to Paris in 1158, in addition to scores of grooms and two hundred and fifty footmen who marched, singing, at the head of the procession—a pleasant and cheerful fancy. In his last progress through France, Richelieu travelled in an immense car furnished as a bedroom. But Thomas had eight such cars, each drawn by five horses. One was his private chapel, another his chamber, and a third his kitchen. The Chancellor's wardrobe filled another car, and two more were filled with barrels of English beer. This, it appeared, was the first introduction of English beer to the French, who found it much to their taste. Sumpter horses, each—the showman's touch—with a monkey on its back, carried chests of money for the journey. Altogether the Chancellor's journey from the coast to Paris must have caused a considerable sensation in the towns and villages. That was Becket's intention. He was a very

shrewd man engaged on a very difficult mission. He was the ambassador of the vassal to his suzerain, and it was his business to convince the suzerain and his subjects of the vassal's greatness. His progress had a definite intention, and its details had been carefully thought out—the circus-like progress through the countryside, with occasional broaching of a barrel of beer, the extravagant banquets in Paris, the generous gifts to the university, where Thomas himself had studied, the payment of the debts of the English students. The last is very characteristic, an example of simple common sense and kindliness. There was certainly ostentation in Thomas's mission to the French king, but it was ostentation with a purpose, fully justified since the purpose was achieved.

The lavishness of Thomas's life in England was equally dictated by policy. Henry was generally out of England, and when he was in England he affected to despise " the decencies of society ", and offended by his bluff manners. Personages of importance who left the royal audience enraged or humiliated were conciliated by the Chancellor's regal hospitality. His constant courtesy was the antidote to his master's rudeness, his constant tact removed

misunderstandings, placated the hostile, and constantly added to the number of the king's friends. The success with which the absolute authority of a frequently absent king was established in England was to no small extent due to his Chancellor's dinner parties.

And with it all, in his inner life, the Chancellor never quite put off the churchman, nor did he ever forget the poor when entertaining the rich. He was, says a contemporary biographer, " singularly frugal ", and his confessor testifies that " no excess ever shamed his life ". " A modest man indeed was the Chancellor, a foe to depravity and uncleanness ". The biographer is indeed astounded by Thomas's immunity from the temptations incidental to his high position :

> The holy fathers have made plain that a chaste monk is like unto a knight who keepeth his wealth and life in a close stronghold. But he who liveth chastely in the world signifieth a knight who fighteth with sword and shield in open field and receiveth a greater reward the more glorious victory he gaineth ; for that indeed is a more wondrous art to stand on the embers being unburnt than to shun the fire and be unscathed. Both these signs point to that laudable man the blessed Thomas. He was placed by the Lord king in the way of such a good hap and fulness of this world's bliss, as hath been before told, and yet he wore over his breast nevertheless such a trusty hauberk of virtue through God's abiding with him that he never departed from a life

of purity and holy endeavour ; for if in the daytime the fulfilment of many duties hindered he would get up anight-tide to worship his Creator.

Such things come only with fasting and prayer, particularly to a man highly placed and engrossed in the world's affairs. A stranger anxious to see the Chancellor was on his road to his palace in the early morning. The biographer relates :

Now the way taketh such a turn that he must needs go by a certain church, and he seeth lying before the door a man prostrate in prayer even unto earth. And when as he stands bethinking him of this sight there comes upon him, as ofttimes may happen, some sneeze or a kind of coughing. And forthwith starts he who lay kneeling on the ground and rises straightway up, then lifteth his hand up to God and thus ends his prayer, and thereupon walks away thence to his own chamber. The newcomer was right eager to know who of the townspeople might follow such worthy ways, and therefore he taketh an eye-mark against the dawn both of his growth and the manner of attire he wore, that he might rather know him if he should happen to see him afterwards. Nor did that matter long await true proof, for no sooner hath he leave to see the chancellor Thomas than he well perceiveth that the very growth and raiment which he had noted before belongeth to no man but to him alone ; for even now Thomas putteth off his over-garment as though he had just entered the room.

Temptation, naturally, often came to him, but he was armed against it. It is related

that a discarded mistress of the king, " goodly and of great wealth ", viewed the minister with notorious favour, and on one occasion a prying landlord believed that the Chancellor was not unresponsive, and set out stealthily to confirm his suspicions. But all he discovered was " a bare-footed man, prostrate on the floor, on whom after kneeling and praying sleep had fallen ". The writer proceeds :

> It was proven here, in truth, that he was a man of pure life and good manners, whom a misdoubting man thought to be like even unto himself.

The asceticism of Thomas's life while he was Chancellor is a point of evident importance to the biographer. It is a common suggestion that in the translation from the court to Canterbury, his nature suffered a " sea change ", and that he was converted by the grace of the episcopacy. There were great inconsistencies in the life of St. Thomas, as there are in the lives of all men, sinners as well as saints, but it is abundantly clear that while Thomas was still in the world, in matters of vast import he was not of the world. Beneath the gorgeous cloak of the courtier there was always the rough shirt of the monk.

There is ample testimony of his care for the poor, whose love and trust were shown

to him in his years of trial. Robert Cricklade says :

> Unto this the lord Thomas added such bounty to needy folk and foreigners that he yielded them in their hardships unstinted comfort in gifts of money, although it were hidden from the knowledge of the multitude.

And Edwin Grim records :

> The poor and the oppressed found ready access to him : the cause of the widow did not come before him in vain : he gave justice and protection to the weak and needy.

His hospitality made friends for the king, but it made enemies for Thomas. Great nobles, envious of his position, " bore Thomas a sullen mind ". But he always had the love of the simple.

Thomas's vast expenditure, made generally on the king's behalf, was met from the revenues of various ecclesiastical and lay positions. He had retained all the preferments granted to him before he became Chancellor, including the rich Archdeaconry of Canterbury. In addition, he had acquired the deanery of Hastings. From the king he received the custodianship of the Tower, which, with the enthusiasm of a good citizen of London, he restored, of the castle of Eye and the castle of Berkhampstead. His nominal

income as Chancellor was comparatively inconsiderable, five shillings a day—a far greater sum, of course, then than now—"one plain simnel, two spiced simnels, a sextary of clear wine, a sextary of ordinary household wine, one large wax candle, and forty pieces of candle besides". But his actual income from its many sources was very large.

After his quarrel with Henry, Thomas was charged with using public moneys for his own purposes. With these charges I shall deal in detail in a subsequent chapter. I refer to them here because one of the charges was that Thomas had appropriated the revenues of vacant bishoprics and abbeys, and this suggests the important question of Thomas's general attitude to the Church while he was the king's minister. The Archbishop Theobald was properly anxious that vacant benefices should be promptly filled. Henry, like Elizabeth, believed that the fewer bishops the better, and he naturally desired to keep sees vacant for as long as possible that the revenues might be used for secular purposes. But though in this matter the Chancellor's action was not always quick enough to please the Archbishop, sees were filled with no really undue delay, and the influence of the

Chancellor was steadily exerted to secure the preferment of prelates of piety and learning. The lesser patronage in his hands was exercised with conscientious care.

> He might have had all the parochial churches that were vacant [says Fitzalan], both in the towns and castles, for no one would deny him, if he would only ask : but he showed such greatness of mind in repressing all views of interest, that he disdained to forestall the poor priests or clerks, or take from them the opportunity of gaining those churches for themselves.

Nevertheless it must be admitted that in some respects Thomas was a sad disappointment to his old patron, Theobald, now growing old and perhaps a little difficult, who retained for him a paternal affection, and who was unable altogether to appreciate the difficulties of his position. The scutage that had been levied to pay for the expedition to Toulouse and, incidentally, at least in part, for Thomas's own military adventures, had been exacted from the Church as well as from the baronage, an evident injustice, since churchmen were under no obligation of military service. Thomas had acquiesced in the levy, if he had not suggested it, and this was used against him, not unfairly, by his arch enemy, Gilbert Foliot, as treachery to the Church. Even a greater apparent

offence was his support of the king in the case of the Bishop of Chichester against the Abbot of Battle. The Abbot possessed charters granted by William the Conqueror, William II., Henry I., and Henry II. himself, exempting him from episcopal authority. The Bishop obtained from Adrian IV., the only English Pope, a brief ordering the Abbot to submit to his jurisdiction, and the Bishop contended that no layman, not even a king, could grant ecclesiastical exemption without papal sanction. The Bishop prejudiced his case by such barefaced lying that good Theobald crossed himself in horror when he heard him. But none the less, his contention was entirely in accord with the Hildebrandian claims, with the teaching that Thomas had received at Bologna, and with the principles for which he died. Theobald asked that the question should be decided by canon law. The king refused. He alone should be the judge, and to the Bishop he angrily declared :

A wonderful and marvellous thing truly is this we hear, that the charters, forsooth, of my kingly predecessors, confirmed by the prerogative of the Crown of England, and witnessed by the magnates, should be deemed beyond our powers by you, my lord bishop. God forbid, God forbid, that in my kingdom what is decreed by me at the instance of

reason, and with the advice of my archbishops, and barons, should be liable to the censure of you and such as you !

Thomas spoke vehemently against the bishop, chiding him for his disloyalty. He may have attached particular importance to the fact that the gift of the royal charter to the Abbot was sanctioned by archbishops and bishops as well as by the barons, but he more or less accepted the claim of the secular prince against the Church when he admitted that, in an ecclesiastical case, the will of the monarch, even when approved by the local dignitaries of the Church, could be superior to the will of the Pope. The case was heard in Colchester in 1157, at a time when Thomas had never imagined that he would be Archbishop. He knew that to have sided with the Bishop of Chichester against the king would certainly have meant his own fall from power, and possibly he compromised with his conscience in order to be able to continue his service to his country and his Church. It may be that he was influenced by more selfish considerations. It may be that he was perfectly honest in his contention, believing that the king was justified by custom, or it may be that he had, for the time, changed his mind, abandoning the theory

of the Church that he had been taught at Canterbury and in Italy, and of which he was to be the most perfervid champion. I note the inconsistency without attempting the folly of explanation. But it seems probable that in a lay position of great dignity and responsibility, Thomas, for a time, lost the definite churchman's point of view. That his ecclesiastical scruples remained was proved three years later when he vigorously, though vainly, opposed the marriage of Matthew of Flanders, Henry's cousin, with Mary of Blois, Abbess of the convent of Romney and bound by her vows to a celibate life.

In another respect, Thomas saddened the heart of Theobald. In his old age, the Archbishop was eager for Church reform, and he was particularly anxious to prevent the exactions from the clergy regularly made by archdeacons in the exercise of their judicial powers. Thomas can rarely, if ever, have personally sat as judge in his archidiaconal court, but letters from Theobald suggest that he was unwilling to sacrifice any of the profits. This is interesting in view of the fact that it was the alleged abuses of the archdeacons' courts that were used by Henry as arguments for the changes incorporated in the Constitutions of Clarendon.

Thomas always needed money, though for worthy and not merely vulgar personal ends. He was often hard put to it to make two ends meet, and it must have been easy for him to find good reasons for refusing to surrender any source of income. He died a saint, but, like many another saint, he often blundered and sometimes sinned.

The close personal friendship between king and Chancellor explains, though it may not justify, Thomas's inconsistencies. Thomas, himself a man of outstanding parts, had a profound admiration for the immense ability of the king. He saw at close hand the revolution effected by his masterful statesmanship. He thoroughly enjoyed being the instrument of his intelligent and far-sighted purpose, and co-operation in public affairs was accompanied by intimate and affectionate friendship. The two men hunted and hawked together, and, in the manner of vigorous youth, sometimes romped together. Once (so it is said), they fought in a London street for the possession of the Chancellor's cloak, to the astonishment of the royal suite and the delight of a shivering beggar to whom the cloak was given. Henry was greatly amused by the state in which Thomas lived, though he doubtless realised its expediency.

With his contempt for etiquette, the king would sometimes ride into the Chancellor's banqueting hall, making his horse vault over the table, to the terror of the solemn guests. The two men were constantly together, in the latter part of his chancellorship Thomas being often with the king in France. Henry had unlimited confidence in him. Their many confidential conversations can have suggested no essential difference. His young son was put into the Chancellor's care. The king confidently counted on Thomas's active help in carrying out the policy which he was planning for England while he was fighting in France, with the details of which the Chancellor must have been familiar. Affection begets affection. Confidence inspires devotion. As he listened to Henry dogmatising with persuasive forcefulness, Thomas may well have hesitated between the practical king and the idealistic Church. It was the king who decided for him.

In 1161, Theobald was very ill, and realised that his end was near. His heart yearned for his adopted son, who was in France with the king, and he wrote a sad letter urging him to return :

> You have now been called again and again to your post, you who ought to have returned at the

first summons of your old and ailing father. Indeed it is to be feared that the Lord may punish your delay, if you still turn a deaf ear to my appeal forgetful of all my kindness and regardless of the father whom you ought to have borne upon your shoulders in his sickness. There would have been no excuse for you, you would have well nigh merited my curse, if it were not that my lord the king excused your absence on the pretext of his own necessity. But as I put the public interests of the king's business before all private interests, I have allowed his will, which I have always preferred before my own where it was possible and right, to overrule my command to you on this condition only, that as soon as you can obtain his consent you no longer delay your return to my side. I make this concession for the present out of regard for your welfare as much as his wish, because I am afraid of the risk you may run if you should offend him by returning home. For if you incur the loss of his favour for my sake, I fear you could not regain it by any efforts of mine.

The king, who had already made up his mind as to Theobald's successor, was unwilling that Thomas's Hildebrandian prejudices should again be excited by death-bed counsels with his old master, and refused to let him go. The Archbishop died in April 1161, and it was not until June 3, 1162, that his successor was enthroned.

In 1162, Thomas was forty-four, a man of attractive charm, instinctive kindliness, outstanding ability and great and varied experi-

ence. In his early manhood, he had carefully studied the nature of the Church of which he was a humble servant, and the laws by which it was governed, the laws which affected its relations not with the state, as we understand it, for the modern state would have seemed a fantastic monstrosity to the mediæval thinker, but to the secular ruler, as all men believed, also appointed by God. Then for eight years he had been very closely associated with a strong intelligent prince intent on initiating the rule of secular law authorised alone by his own will, and resentful of any opposition. Without the Church, as Mr. Chesterton has said, the Middle Ages would have had no law, but in the very nature of the Church there has always been an unconquerable idealism that declares that there can be no rule without an exception. Between an ambitious and effective monarch and a Church conscious of its divine mission, conflict must sooner or later occur. Of that Thomas of London was certainly not unaware in the great crisis of his life in the early days of 1162. When he went to Canterbury, he knew that he was going to bitter trial and conflict.

CHAPTER IV

THOMAS THE KING'S FRIEND

RARELY has the English Church been so fortunate in its Primates as in the century that followed the Norman Conquest. Stigand, the last of the Saxon Archbishops of Canterbury, was a conscienceless and incapable self-seeker. The Saxon clergy were undisciplined, the bishops ignorant and indifferent. William of Normandy was a master ruler, and, incidentally a pious son of the Church, living a life of striking regularity. He detested disorder, equally in public affairs and in private conduct, and one of the first tasks that he set himself was to restore order in the English Church. It had to be brought into line with Continental developments and within the influence of the new reforming zeal, and the king had to find a competent and devoted Archbishop. His brother, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, was anxious for the preferment as a step towards the Papacy. But

Odo was, so his brother described him, "not a man to be trusted, ambitious, given to fleshly desires", and William was too sage a king to be the victim of nepotism. And after much trouble and persuasion, he induced Lanfranc, the saintly and extremely able Abbot of Bec, to allow himself to be elected Archbishop of Canterbury in August 1070.

It is outside the scope of this book even to summarise the Lanfranc reforms, but it is necessary for my purpose to emphasise the fact that it was because he was a good churchman, and primarily for the good of the Church, that Lanfranc was persuaded to leave Bec for Canterbury. In his insistence on reform within the Church, Lanfranc was the effective disciple of Hildebrand. In his attitude to the problem of the relation between the sovereign and the Church he was more half-hearted in following the great eleventh-century Pope. He was largely responsible for William's separation of the civil and ecclesiastical courts, a step that was to have far-reaching consequences. It was part of the reconstituted Church self-government, established in the six Councils summoned by Lanfranc between 1072 and 1086. But Lanfranc was also in agreement with the king in resisting "papal aggression" in establishing

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for the Church of England a modified freedom from interference by Rome, and at the same time acknowledging the right of the sovereign actively to share in Church government. The principles, accepted by the king and the Archbishop, have been summarised as follows :

1. The clergy shall not be permitted to acknowledge anyone as Pope, until the royal consent has been first obtained.
2. No letters from Rome shall be published until they have first been approved by the King.
3. The Church of England in council assembled under its Primate may pass no laws or canons but such as are agreeable to the King's pleasure and are first ordained by him.
4. No bishop may implead or punish any of the King's vassals even for incest or adultery, or any other great sin, except by the King's precept.
5. No ecclesiastic shall leave the country at his own pleasure.

It would seem from this agreement that Lanfranc conceded a great part of the claim afterwards made by Henry II. and refused by Becket. The king was accepted as the actual ruler of the Church. A definite limit was imposed on the power of the Pope in the English Church. But the agreement must be considered with the established independence of the ecclesiastical courts, and the implied recognition of the peculiar status

and, to some extent, the peculiar allegiance of the clerk. Between the times of Lanfranc and Becket these courts vastly extended their jurisdiction, on the whole, for the public good, but in a manner certainly not anticipated by William the Conqueror. At the beginning their existence was an implied admission that the clerk was not as other men. It must be remembered, too, that the Lanfranc agreement was made before the full significance of Gregory's excommunication of the Emperor Henry IV. and of the subsequent journey to Canossa was fully realised. In England at the Conquest, the aid of a masterful secular prince was needed that the Church might be thoroughly cleansed and revived. After a hundred years, it became the more necessary that the Church should proclaim and, at any price, maintain its independence.

Anselm, Lanfranc's successor, was so much a saint that historians have been impelled to wag their heads solemnly over his impracticability. He was an alien of such notable piety that the whole western world was "filled to inebriation with the nectar of Anselm's excellent character". It was for his character alone that he was selected as Lanfranc's successor after the see had been vacant for

four years, and he assuredly made no personal attempt to secure the preferment. With a splendid contempt for worldly wisdom, before his election he sternly admonished the king, William Rufus, for his evil conduct, and only agreed to his nomination as Archbishop after the king had solemnly promised that the oppressors of the poor, however high their rank, should be sternly punished. It was because he was a zealous servant of the Church, and not a mere tractable servant of the king, that St. Anselm was numbered among the successors of St. Augustine. All through his primacy Anselm fought for the rights and Church privileges against both William Rufus and Henry I. Already conditions had changed, and Anselm suffered persecution and exile rather than admit the right, acknowledged by Lanfranc, of the king to interfere in Church government. He was an immovable Hildebrandian. "Go you to the king. I will abide in God." And the determined Italian, emaciated by the persistent austerity of his life, in 1107, settled a compromise with Henry I. that was certainly in the Church's favour. Its terms were :

1. That for the future no one shall be invested by the king or any lay hand in any bishopric or abbey by the delivering of a pastoral staff or a ring.

2. That no one elected to any prelacy shall be denied consecration on account of the homage that he does to the king.

The right of investiture was definitely abandoned. A Hildebrandian victory was won, while a very proper concession was made in the agreement that the bishop should acknowledge his secular allegiance to the king.

The next two archbishops, Ralph of Escures, consecrated in 1114, the see having again been vacant this time for five years, and William of Corbeuil, consecrated in 1123, were men of less importance. Ralph was a good-humoured, witty Norman, of whom a contemporary said:

Inferior to none in piety, he was eminent for his literary attainments and for his surpassing affability. In the multitude of his good fortunes he would have sought for nothing more than to have conferred still greater benefits upon his friends.

His prelacy was a time of difficulty. There were rival popes in Rome and rival archbishops contending for the primacy in England, and, compelled by the confusion in Rome, Ralph returned to the Lanfranc policy of maintaining the partial independence of the English Church. At his death, the reforming spirit brought to England by

Lanfranc had spent its strength, and the state of the Church was almost as bad as before the coming of the Normans. There was bitter jealousy between the seculars and the religious, and a general neglect of spiritual duty.

Ralph's successor, chosen for want of a better, was, in his character, a sad contrast to his three predecessors. "He was", we are told, "a man of smooth face and strictly religious manners, but much more ready to amass money than to spend it". In 1125 during his primacy a synod was held in Westminster Abbey, which, to the indignation of the Archbishop, was presided over by a specially appointed papal legate. The proceedings at this synod are important. It denounced simony and clerical marriages, forbade laymen to hold benefices, and affirmed the sole authority of the episcopate in ecclesiastical affairs. It is a matter, too, of interest that, in 1127, Archbishop William himself became papal legate, and afterwards claimed to speak "on the authority of Peter the Prince of Apostles and our own". He died, unregretted, in 1161, to be followed by Theobald. Of Theobald I have already written at length, and here all that need be added is that it was character and character alone that won him

his high place. Lanfranc, Anselm, Ralph, Theobald were all chosen as archbishops simply and solely because they were good churchmen.

When Theobald died, Henry II. determined that the next Archbishop should be the instrument of the king's will. He was not to be a churchman appointed for the good of the Church, but a statesman whose business it would be to compel the Church to at least partial submission to the king. In particular, Henry had determined exactly to define the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, which removed all clerks in holy orders, both major and minor, from the control of the civil authorities. There was no clear demarcation between the canon and the common law, and in certain cases the ecclesiastical courts claimed the right to decide cases in which only lay litigants were concerned. Henry did not wish to destroy the ecclesiastical courts, or to take from them the right to try cases of heresy. He did not even propose to remove clerks guilty of crime from their jurisdiction. He demanded that a clerk, convicted of crime and degraded, should be surrendered to the civil authorities for more condign punishment.

It is not to be denied that the ecclesias-

tical courts were sometimes inefficient and corrupt, and it was easy to find plausible reasons for a radical limitation of their powers. But it was not for their inefficiency or their corruption that Henry had decided on their destruction. It was because they were not directly subject to his will. He realised that it would be far more difficult to bend the bishops than it had been to break the barons, and in order to carry out his policy, he recognised that it was necessary to have an ally in the See of Canterbury. From the king's point of view Thomas was obviously the primate to be desired. He knew the king's mind. They were united by mutual confidence and mutual affection, and only rarely had there been any difference of opinion between them. It was true that there was no English precedent for the preferment of a chancellor to an archbishopric. But Henry was not a prince who worried much about tradition, and he had determined to follow the example of the Emperor and to govern Church and State by means of the same official.

Thomas remained abroad on the king's business for a year after Theobald's death, and it was at Toulouse in April 1162 that the king formally told him: "My will is

fully settled that thou be Canterbury's Archbishop". The announcement can hardly have come as a surprise. He knew what was in his master's mind, and he had definitely decided to decline the proposed elevation. There is almost grotesque misunderstanding in the sneering comment of the writer in *The Cambridge Mediæval History* that the story of "Thomas's unwillingness to become primate was probably invented to fit the history of the struggle". On the contrary, the unwillingness was natural, and entirely in accord with what we know of Thomas's character. He had for years lived the luxurious life of a highly placed secular minister. His position was assured. His work was pleasant. His place was second only to that of the king. Of the sincerity of his religion there can be no question, and it is rather silly spite to doubt that, being the man he was, he honestly felt entirely unworthy to be the successor of Lanfranc, Anselm and Theobald. "You have in your realm", he told the king, "such laudable persons as that my fleshly feebleness fareth low before their feet". Thomas knew, too, the jealousies and antagonisms that his position would involve. His selection could hardly be welcomed by the clergy despite the fact that it had been warmly

desired by Theobald, since he had acquiesced in the curtailment of their privileges. His worldly life would not commend him to the religious. Moreover, he was fully acquainted with the king's plans, and he knew that, ordained priest and consecrated Archbishop, he could never permit those plans to be carried out without bitter and persistent opposition.

To me it is ridiculous to suppose that a miracle happened after the consecration in Canterbury Cathedral, and I find nothing inconsistent in Thomas's conduct at this high crisis of his life. As Chancellor he had only an implied responsibility to God for the well-being of the Church, and he might agree, more or less unwillingly, to certain apparently anti-clerical proposals. As Archbishop his responsibility and his duty would be very different. Thomas knew himself, and he knew that he was not a man to shirk responsibility or to neglect duty. He also knew the king and his fixity of purpose. Unless the Archbishop were false to his charge, "whosoever is made Archbishop must quickly give offence to God or to the king".

Thomas was a very worried man in those spring days in Normandy in 1162. He was only forty-four, robust, pleasure-loving, the

intimate of a great king. Hunting and an occasional military adventure broke the monotony of his official work. And his were all the privileges of an established royal favourite. As an alternative he was offered a position which, as he knew, though the king did not guess it, would mean the abandonment of all the pleasant incidents of his life and the imitation of the austerity of Anselm, a position of ever growing difficulty which would certainly sooner or later cost him Henry's friendship. It was this last prospect that troubled Thomas most, for devotion to the king's service had been the passion of his life. So he endeavoured to escape, with little hope of success. It has been suggested that if Thomas's disinclination had been anything more than " the decent resistance of an ambitious prelate ", the king would not have persisted. But Henry had made up his mind. He had publicly announced his intention. He had disregarded the warnings of his mother. And when he commanded it was for his subject to obey. The idea that so tried a servant might be forced to rebellion seemed to him absurd. He intended to have Thomas at Canterbury to carry out his ecclesiastical plans and incidentally to safeguard the interests of his family, as Theobald had

safeguarded them ten years before. Kings have often been shocked by their subjects, but never more thoroughly than Henry was shocked and surprised by Becket. His faithful friend turned rebel. His pliant Chancellor became the most obstinate of prelates. If to the pious, Thomas, when he went to Canterbury, appeared to have been converted by a miracle of God, to the king it seemed that he had become possessed by a legion of devils.

Two churchmen of authority urged Thomas to bow to the king's will. Henry of Winchester, now an old man, held in high esteem for his wisdom and moderation, reminded Thomas of Theobald's dying wish, and pointed out to him that he must either go up or go down. To refuse the archbishopric would assuredly mean to lose the chancellorship. With the Cardinal Henry of Pisa, who was staying in Normandy, Thomas discussed his dilemma on broader grounds.

" The King is planning an attack on the rights of the Church. If I am made Archbishop I must resist it at all costs."

" If your fears are justified, there is the greater reason for you, the Church's ablest son, to accept the call to her service."

" But, Eminence, I shall earn the King's enmity

and lose the friendship that has been the best thing in my life."

"That, my son, is the sacrifice demanded of you."

"But above all I am not worthy. I have lived in the world. I have fought in the army of the King. Who am I that I should lead the hosts of the Lord?"

"In serving the Church, my son, you will save your own soul."

Something of the sort was the purport of the conversation in Falaise that decided Thomas to acquiescence. Froude pleasantly suggests that it was the deliberate intention of both Cardinal and Chancellor to thwart the king in the particular purpose which the promotion of Becket had been "intended to further". And he adds: "It may be hard to call such conduct treacherous, but hard language is sometimes true". In this case, it is definitely untrue. Henry of Pisa owed no allegiance to Henry of Anjou, and he would certainly have been a traitor to the Church of which he was a servant had he not endeavoured to defeat the king's intention. And in Becket's case there was not so much "deliberate intention" as the consideration of the course of action to which he would be compelled. His repeated warnings to the king make the charge of treachery merely malevolent.

The *congé d'élire* was taken to Canterbury by Henry's famous Justiciar, Richard de Lucy, attended by three bishops and an abbot. The chapter hesitated. The king's nomination was indeed generally unpopular, and there is considerable truth in the complaint that Thomas was forced on the Church by the king, " in spite of the warnings of his mother, the loud protest of the whole realm, the sighing and groaning of the Church of God as far as she dare give voice to her complaint ". The Canterbury monks were unwilling to elect a secular who was not even a priest. They dreaded a prelate who was so closely associated with the court. They naturally regarded Thomas's life as anything but a fitting preparation for an archbishopric. They resented the pressure of secular authority. The Justiciar was conciliatory. He pointed out particularly the advantage to the Church of possessing " such a welcome mediator between the king and the priesthood ". And with obvious reluctance Thomas was, at last, unanimously elected.

The election was confirmed at a synod attended by bishops, abbots and priors in the refectory at Westminster, held on the Wednesday before Whit Sunday 1162, the king's eight-year-old son Henry being present to

represent his father. Opposition was boldly voiced by Gilbert Foliot, the open enemy of Becket. Foliot was a Cluniac monk of the most austere life who never ate meat nor drank wine, and to whom the worldling Thomas, with his record of anti-Church administration, seemed a monstrous successor to Theobald. At the beginning, Foliot was undoubtedly honest. But he was always bitter, and hatred caused, as is its wont, a pitiful deterioration of his character. His suspicion of Thomas was by no means unreasonable, and it is evidently unfair to suggest that he was only influenced by disappointment that he had not himself been elected Archbishop. It was indeed quite impossible for such a man not to believe that Thomas had intrigued for his preferment. The favour of the king could not be denied, and it was natural enough for the stern monk to declare : " You entered into the sheepfold not by the door but by climbing up another way ! "

The synod was, however, swayed by Henry of Winchester, and accepted the Canterbury decision, and the little Prince Henry formally gave the royal assent.

Thomas was in London when the synod met. Immediately after his election, he petitioned for full release from all secular obliga-

tions, and the petition was granted. The quittance was to be challenged two years later, and for more than one reason it is of interest and importance. It is said by his critics that Thomas was conscious of financial irregularities during his chancellorship, and was anxious to save himself from prosecution. But it is far more likely that he wanted to cut himself entirely off from his secular life. His application was the complement to his resignation of the chancellorship, the date of which is uncertain. This resignation was his first overt revolt against the king's wishes, for, as I have said, it was part of the royal plan that Thomas should be the head both of the secular and the spiritual administrations of the realm.

There was nothing of the gay courtier in the sombre ecclesiastic who rode from London to Canterbury early in Whit week 1162. Thomas certainly had a shrewd idea of the goal to which he was riding. He gossiped seriously with his faithful follower and future biographer, Herbert of Bosham, bidding him prove his friendship by outspoken criticism, and recalling, perhaps to strengthen his resolution, the parable of the talents and the reward of the faithful servant. This ride to Canterbury was for the Archbishop a journey

from the court to the cloister, from ease to anxiety.

Thomas was ordained priest by the Bishop of Rochester, the brother of Theobald, on the Saturday, and on Sunday, June 3rd, he was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury by Henry of Winchester. Fourteen diocesans assisted at the consecration, and Thomas's old friend, John of Salisbury, was in the congregation. But Roger of Pont l'Évêque, Archbishop of York, an old rival of the Archbishop's early days at Canterbury, refused submission to Canterbury and was an absentee. And so was Gilbert Foliot. Immediately after the consecration Thomas said his first Mass. Two months later he received the papal pallium.

Having entirely put off the old Adam, Thomas just as thoroughly proceeded to put on the new. Henceforth, he always wore the habit of a canon regular, and although he never became a religious, he lived according to the Augustinian rule. The splendid courtier now " mortified his flesh by spare diet, and his general drink was water ". He had become a man with a very sacred mission, and a man determined that the mission should be fulfilled. It was remembered that even in his days in the world he had " never passed

the bounds of purity and honour ", and now to his friends he seemed the just man made perfect. The monks, who had received him with reasonable suspicion, were astonished by his humble piety and his eagerness for service. The affection and confidence of the poor, which were to be demonstrated in the time of adversity, were attracted by his kindly charity. A tenth part of his income was regularly given to the needy, and his chaplain records :

> In his secret cell he every day, kneeling on his knees, washed the feet of thirteen beggars, in memory of Christ : he then, and after a full refection, gave four shillings to each of them. If he was on any occasion, though seldom, prevented from doing this in his own person, he took care to have the duty discharged by deputy.

" The Blessed Sacrament ", says Fr. Bridgett in his *History of the Holy Eucharist in Great Britain*, " was the strength of the saint in all his combats ". Herbert of Bosham says :

> He himself did not celebrate every day, and this was, as he himself said, not through negligence but reverence. . . . When he received the sacred vestments from the ministers, his countenance changed, and he was so affected that tears burst from his eyes. And when he stood at the altar praying for his sins and those of his people, his heart was so humbled and contrite, that he rather sobbed than

spoke the words of intercession. During the early part of the Mass which is called the Mass of Catechumens, to preserve himself from distractions, while the ministers were singing, he would read some devout book, most frequently the book of prayers composed by his predecessor St. Anselm. He generally said one collect, and sometimes three, but rarely if ever more. But all who witnessed his Mass attest that he wept and sobbed as if he saw and touched the wounds of Christ.

And in the same connection John of Salisbury tells us :

When he was alone he shed tears in wonderful abundance, and when he stood at the altar, he seemed to be present even in the body at the Passion of the Lord. He handled the divine sacraments with great reverence, so that the very handling of them strengthened the faith and fervour of those who witnessed it.

In all this there seems to me abundant evidence of sincerity, and the same sincerity is to be found in the charge which Thomas delivered to the September ordinands, three months after his consecration. I again quote Herbert of Bosham :

I beseech you, brethren, by the mercy of God that you suffer not my hands to be laid suddenly upon you except you be ready to minister worthily in the Church of God according to the nature of your office ; lest I be partaker in other men's sins, who feel myself too much weighted by the multitude of my own. For sure it is that he who ordains,

knowingly and without much probation, an unworthy person, even if the ordained afterwards be reformed, gravely offendeth God ; for if the ordained man be not reformed, he who ordains defiles himself with the sins of the ordained, with those especially which he doeth after the day of his ordination. Wherefore the apostle commandeth Timothy, saying : " Lay hands suddenly on no man, lest you be partaker of other men's sins ". And you, therefore, my brethren, we forbid on behalf of Almighty God and ourselves, that any suffer the yoke of the Lord to be placed on him by us, if he feel himself unfit. Let him abide rather in that which is good, so long as he hath not strength for that which is better.

To suppose that such words could be said by a mere worldly self-seeker is to write Thomas down as a very monster of hypocrisy, and appears to me a crazy absurdity. Mrs. J. R. Green ascribes Thomas's change of life to political sagacity. For me it is sufficient to ascribe it to the love of God.

Both the Church and the nation that had expected so little were naturally astounded when they heard rumours that the Archbishop was giving so much. Henry was still in Normandy, but the news from Canterbury came to him in letters from his son, who remained in Thomas's care, and the king must have read the letters with astounded misgiving.

CHAPTER V

THOMAS THE ARCHBISHOP

On January 25, 1163, Henry landed at Southampton, having been absent from England since August 1158. He was met at Southampton by Prince Henry and the Archbishop, and the coarse-grained king must have noticed the great change in the manner and demeanour of his servant. He was no longer hail-fellow-well-met. He was no longer ready for rough horseplay. He was distant, dignified and austere, and he took no pains to hide his disapproval of the unclerical manners of the priests in the royal entourage. Henry probably regarded Thomas's new manner as a temporary and half-hypocritical pose, and, with it all, the two men still met as friends. The king had been surprised by the rumours that had reached him in Normandy, but he knew nothing of the long consultations that the Archbishop had had at Canterbury with legal specialists,

discussing every aspect of canonical law and the rights and privileges of the ecclesiastical courts. It was not long, however, before relations grew definitely strained. Thomas insisted on resigning the chancellorship, while, on the other hand, the king had considerable difficulty in compelling him to resign the Archdeaconry of Canterbury. It was clearly indefensible for the same ecclesiastic to be both Archbishop and Archdeacon, and his critics have suggested that Thomas was mainly concerned with the retention of the Archdeacon's large income. But the habit of always discovering the worst possible motive generally leads to error. In accordance with the policy on which he had already decided, the Archbishop was anxious that the exact status of the ecclesiastical courts should be decided before the appointment of a new man as the most important of all ecclesiastical magistrates.

The Archbishop journeyed with the king from Southampton to Oxford and London. They were together on Palm Sunday in Canterbury, and from thence they went together to Windsor. During these weeks it was decided to offer the Bishopric of London to Gilbert Foliot, and nothing in the career of Thomas Becket as Archbishop of Canterbury

shows more strikingly his unselfish devotion to the Church. Of all his diocesans Foliot was most openly his enemy. He was a man of strong character, not easily to be moved, and Becket was far too shrewd to suppose that his friendship could be bought by preferment. But Foliot's piety was conspicuous, and his ability was far above the average. He was a man eminently suited to occupy the metropolitan see, and the Archbishop, disregarding personal considerations, persuaded the king that the offer should be made, and urged Foliot to accept. It should be added that Foliot had hardly been consecrated before he endeavoured to establish the independence of his see, and declined to acknowledge allegiance to Canterbury.

In May, Thomas attended the Council at Tours called by Pope Alexander III., who, owing to his quarrel with the Emperor Barbarossa, was living in exile in France. Before his elevation to the papal throne, Alexander had been a professor of canon law at Bologna University, and there can be no doubt that the Archbishop consulted him concerning the struggle which he foresaw was inevitable in England. Incidentally he urged the Pope, who had recently canonised Edward the Confessor, to agree to the canonisation of

Anselm. Since Anselm had spent the greater part of his primacy in opposing the will of two of his predecessors, Becket's endeavour still further antagonised the king. Indeed, Henry much resented the journey to Tours. He had made up his mind to go much further than his Norman predecessors in resisting the exercise of papal authority within his dominions, and three years before, Becket's friend, John of Salisbury, then secretary to Archbishop Theobald, had been exiled for conveying appeals to Rome from judgements in the English courts.

There were smiles, perhaps half-suspicious, for Thomas when the king landed at Southampton in January. There were nothing but frowns for him when he himself returned to England in June. His enemies had been busy during his absence, and a considerable indictment had been prepared against him, the most serious part of which was that he had insisted on the return to the see of Canterbury of properties filched from it by acquisitive barons, of course with the consent of the king. An active quarrel occurred at the beginning of July. Henry proposed to compel the sheriffs to pay into the royal exchequer the proceeds of a certain tax which had hitherto been used for local purposes, a

high-handed suggestion, which would have had its analogy if the British Government during the Great War had seized the local rates in Manchester to pay the wages of the army in France. Becket, whom Dr. Hutton describes as " a constitutionalist to the core ", declared that the proposal was entirely unjustified. This was the first attempt that had been made since the Conquest to resist the king in matters of finance, and the Archbishop's protest showed that his care for justice extended beyond the confines of the Church. Public opinion, which counted for something even in the twelfth century, was naturally on his side, and the king, now openly resentful, was forced to withdraw his demand.

It was now war between the two men, and Henry, to whose imperious nature opposition was intolerable, looked eagerly for an opportunity to punish the Archbishop for what he regarded as ungrateful insolence. The opportunity was soon found. As has been said in a previous chapter, Henry believed that it was necessary for the stability of the crown to establish in England a single judicial system, and to modify the dual system of secular and ecclesiastical courts which had been established by William the

Conqueror. To do this it was necessary to establish a case against the ecclesiastical courts, to prove that they were venal and inefficient, partial and unjust. But the trouble was that generally this was what they were not. The ecclesiastical courts, with their well-defined canonical law, were infinitely more popular than the royal courts without tradition or prestige, necessarily influenced by the wealthy and inevitably arbitrary in their judgements. It is quite clear that if the charges brought against the ecclesiastical courts by the historians to whom Henry II. is a hero, and who write with a steady prejudice against the Church, were true, the king could have easily swept them away amid the applauding approval of his people. Dr. Hutton, most cautious of historians, says: "Men brought suits where they could procure a rapid and probably a just decision, and where on the whole the forms were less complicated and the proceedings more intelligent". If this be a fair statement, and I am convinced that it is, the charge that the ecclesiastical courts did nothing but protect criminous clerks from the just punishment of their offences must be regarded as the hollowest of pretences.

The case selected to prove the partiality

of ecclesiastical justice is indeed a tribute far more than a criticism. I quote at length from Edward Grim:

A new method of attacking a clerk, Philip of Blois by name, was resorted to by the resuscitation of a charge that had long been forgotten. He had been accused of the murder of a certain knight, but when the case had been heard in the audience of the bishop of Lincoln, he was acquitted by ecclesiastical law, and, the matter ended, he was claimed as free by his kinsfolk. Later on, however, one of the king's officers to whom that duty belonged, wishing, from an ancient grudge he bore him, that the clerk should be ruined, brought forward the case again and repeated the charge of murder. But the clerk, being a man of high birth, overwhelmed with grief and indignation, attacked the sheriff with abuse. The sheriff reported this contumelious language to the king, who, glad (as it was thought) to have an occasion of venting his spleen on a clerk, poured upon Philip the wrath that he had conceived.

When the question was raised about the clerk in the presence of the archbishop, the king protested that full justice should be done both about the homicide and about the insult, and that the acquittal would not stand. But the archbishop received the clerk into his court under the protection of the Church that he might there answer for himself and reply to the charge. Bishops and others of either order were accordingly sent by the king to judge the clerk. He denied the charge of homicide, asserting that he ought not to be compelled to make any further answer to it, and that there was no legal right to try a case over again, a case which had been ended by the solemn purgation and which the peace he had made with his opponents had buried.

" I confess," he said, " that in the bitterness of my heart I have abused the king's officer, but I promise a full amendment for my misdeeds ; yet let not the correction exceed the bounds of reason." " And we decree," said they, " that your prebend remain under the king's hand for two years, and your possessions and all your incomings to be distributed at his will and pleasure to the poor." They added that he was to stand naked before the king's official, just as a layman might, and offer him his arms for the injury he had done him and live in subjection to him. The clerk submitted to the judgment, glad to have escaped the sentence of death which the king threatened.

The king, on the other hand, wishing to condemn the man to death, contended that an injury had been done to himself and to the prejudice of his court. He exclaimed that the bishops had had respect of the person because of the archbishop, and had not judged according to equity, and he added, " By the eyes of God, you shall swear to me that you judged a just judgment and did not spare the man because he was a clerk."

Grim definitely declares that the murder with which Philip, who appears to have been a canon of Lincoln, was accused had " long ago been forgotten ". To prove Henry's love of justice, modern eulogists of the king definitely say that it was committed in 1163. The probability is that Philip had been concerned in some youthful brawl in which perhaps accidental murder had been committed. It is not denied that in the ecclesiastical courts the prisoner was always given

the benefit of the doubt, and that justice was always tempered with mercy. But the verdict of acquittal certainly suggests that the crime would in modern terms be more accurately described as manslaughter rather than murder. Years passed and an enemy, eager to exploit the king's well-known dislike of ecclesiastical jurisdiction in order to obtain personal revenge, caused the case to be reopened. Philip lost his temper and grossly insulted his enemy. This is fully admitted in Grim's candid narrative. The anger was justifiable enough, but the insults came badly from a clerk in Holy Orders. Henry saw in the incident the occasion for which he was waiting. A murderer had gone unpunished, a royal officer had been affronted. The Archbishop was prompt and dignified. Before any attempt could be made to hale Philip before a secular court, he was summoned to appear by the Primate. He very properly claimed that he could not be tried twice for the same offence, particularly after that offence had been purged, while, at the same time, he pleaded guilty to the insults, and received an extremely severe punishment. It is difficult to conceive a fuller justification for ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

Compare the attitude of the king who

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demanded execution and the Archbishop who was eager for justice! Mr. G. K. Chesterton has very fairly summarised the ground of the quarrel between the king and Archbishop when he writes:

> It is always the first fact that escapes notice; and the first fact about the Church was that it created a machinery of pardon, where the State could only work with a machinery of punishment. It claimed to be a divine detective who helped the criminal to escape by a plea of guilty. It was, therefore, in the very nature of the institution, that when it did punish materially it punished more lightly. If any modern man were put back in the Becket quarrel, his sympathies would certainly be torn in two; for if the King's scheme was the more rational, the Archbishop's was the more humane.

In two other cases that occurred in the autumn of 1163, the ecclesiastical courts were accused of partiality to clerical offenders. In the diocese of Salisbury a priest who had mortally wounded a man was sentenced to be "degraded from all his honours and move not a foot out of a house of penitence for ever". The ecclesiastical courts were not permitted to sentence to death, and imprisonment for life was their severest penalty. In a second case a clerk stole a chalice from the church of St. Mary le Bow, and was sentenced to degradation and branding. In this the

penalty was made severer than it would have been in order to please the king. But he was determined that matters should be brought to a head, and the whole question of criminal jurisdiction was discussed at a council that met at Westminster on October 1. The king opened the council with the charge that the bishops had protected criminals from " rightful punishment ". " We therefore demand of you," he concluded, " by the honour and the obedience you owe the crown, that ye deliver all such clerks as you let wrongfully slip away from our power into sundry places inland as well as abroad, into our hand for rightful punishment, and as to this matter we desire to have clear answers from you."

Becket's reply was conciliatory. He claimed the right of clerks to be tried by their peers, but he agreed that if found guilty of such crimes as manslaughter, theft or robbery, and after being excommunicated and degraded, " they are amenable to lay folk law, but not till then ". The king would have no compromise. He demanded that the bishops should " observe his royal custom ", and they, inspired by the Archbishop, promised that they would observe the royal custom. They added, however,

the extremely important qualifying clause, "saving their order". Henry thoroughly understood the significance of the qualification, and in a fit of furious anger broke up the council, and, with his customary vehemence, rode out of London.

He was back again, however, twelve days later for a ceremony that came as an interlude in the strife between Canterbury and the crown. At midnight on October 13 the Abbot of Westminster, accompanied by the Archbishop and in the presence of the king, opened the tomb of the new saint, Edward the Confessor, before the high altar of the Abbey, to find the body completely preserved and the long white curling beard still visible. The ring of St. John that the king wore was taken out and venerated as a relic, and with what seems to us curious irreverence, the vestments of the Confessor were turned into three copes. Miracles followed the opening of the grave, an Irishman and a clerk from Winchester being cured of demoniacal possession. Immediately after the ceremony, Gilbert Foliot was consecrated Bishop of London.

Becket's masterfulness had carried the majority of the bishops with him at the council at Westminster, but, in some cases,

the support was half-hearted, and Hilary of Chichester, an old opponent of the Archbishop, changed the words "saving our order" into the far less emphatic "in good faith". After the council Henry took counsel with an unscrupulous churchman, Arnulf of Lisieux, and through his efforts a cave was formed within the episcopate against Becket, and in favour of the king's proposals. It was headed by Roger of Pont l'Évêque, Archbishop of York, who had never admitted the supremacy of Canterbury, and among its members were the bishops of London, Lincoln and Chichester.

Becket was certainly not unaware of the intrigues of his own suffragans, and there was no attempt at least on the part of Foliot to disguise his enmity. But the Archbishop continued what seemed to him the path of duty, undaunted and unperturbed. The revenues of vacant bishoprics were a prerogative of the crown, but Becket, caring only for the good of the Church, insisted on the immediate nomination of a successor to Foliot in the see of Hereford, and Henry, greedy for the Church's money, was still further exasperated by his contumacy, though he could not well refuse. The Archbishop's old master in Paris, Robert of Melun,

was selected and consecrated by Thomas on December 22 in Canterbury Cathedral.

Despairing of loyal and effective support from the dignitaries of the Church in England, Thomas now invoked the aid of the Pope. Despite his natural sympathy for a prelate fighting for the principles which he himself had taught, Alexander dared not openly break with Henry, the most powerful prince in Christendom, while, thanks to the patronage of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, a rival Pope, Paschal III., reigned in Rome. Henry, indeed, disregarding his general policy of ignoring papal authority, had himself endeavoured to enlist Alexander as an ally against Thomas, and had sent a special mission to him to suggest that he should appoint the Archbishop of York as papal legate. The position was explained to Thomas in a letter written from France by his messenger, John of Poictiers, a native of Canterbury, who was to become Archbishop of Lyons in 1181. But Henry of Pisa, who had persuaded Thomas to accept the Archbishopric, promised his aid, and Alexander sternly admonished the Archbishop of York for his attitude to his brother of Canterbury, and also wrote to Foliot, urging him to act as mediator between the Archbishop and the

king, a rôle which Foliot certainly had no intention of assuming. Nothing more could be expected from the Pope in his exile at Sens. "Wherefore," wrote John of Poictiers, "whatsoever you do, beloved Father and Lord, you must look solely to the Will of God and to the Church whose liberties He has given you to preserve; and from Him alone look for consolation and reward of your labour."

After reading this letter, Thomas must have realised that the battle which he was called upon to fight must be fought alone. There was no one on whom he could count for help except his few undistinguished and comparatively powerless friends, and possibly two or three of his suffragans. But surrender never entered his mind, though the king already believed that the Archbishop's obstinacy was broken and that reconciliation might now be arranged on the royal terms. He accordingly appointed another meeting in a field at Northampton. I quote the story from the account written by Roger of Pontigny:

> The king, for the present frustrated of his intent, not long after when he was at Northampton, called the archbishop to him, wishing to try his constancy if perchance he might turn him and bend him to

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his will. When the archbishop drew nigh and his approach was made known to the king, he (it is not known with what design) sent certain to meet him and say, " The king is lodged in the town with many men and you are come with a great multitude ; nor is there room to hold you both, wherefore the king commands to await him here. Here he will come to speak with you." And when the archbishop had turned aside into a field, straightway without delay came the king ; to whom running the archbishop sought to prevent him with due salutation of reverence. But when because of the neighing and kicking of their lusty steeds on which they rode they could not come anigh each other, they changed their horses and withdrew together apart. Thus began the king : " Have I not raised you from an humble and poor man to the height of honour and dignity ? It seemed but a small thing to me unless I made you also father of the kingdom, and even preferred you to myself. How is it that so many benefits, so many proofs of my love towards you, known to all, have so soon passed from your mind, that you are now not only ungrateful but oppose me in everything ? "

The archbishop answered : " Far be it from me, my lord. I am not unmindful of the favours which not you alone but God Who dispenseth all things deigned to confer on me through you ; wherefore far be it from me to be ingrate enough to resist your will in anything, so long as it accords with the will of God. Your Grace knows how faithful I have been to you, to whom I look but for a worldly reward. How much more then must I do faithful and true service to Almighty God from Whom I have received temporal and look for spiritual benefits. You indeed are my lord, but He is both your Lord and mine, to forgo Whose will that I might

obey yours would be expedient neither for you nor me. For at His awful judgement we shall both be judged as servants of one Lord, where neither of us can answer for the other, and each one, all disguise failing, will receive according to his deeds. We must obey our temporal lords, but not against God, as saith S. Peter, 'We must obey God rather than men.'" To this replied the king, "I don't want you to preach a sermon; are you not the son of one of my villeins?" "In truth," said the archbishop, "I am not sprung from royal race. Neither was S. Peter, the chief of the Apostles, on whom the Lord deigned to confer the keys of heaven and the headship of the whole church." "True," said the king, "but he died for his Lord." The venerable prelate replied, "And I will die for my Lord when the time is come." Then said the king, "You trust too much to the ladder you have mounted by."

And the archbishop answered, "I trust and lean upon God, for cursed is the man that putteth his hope in man. Nevertheless whatever you may say and may answer, as of old so now, I am ready for your honour and good pleasure, saving my order. But on these things which concern your honour and the salvation of your soul you should rather have consulted one whom you have ever found faithful and useful in your counsel rather than those who, under pretence of your honour, have kindled this flame of envy, and strive to take vengeance on me, who never hurt them. You will not deny that I was ever your faithful servant though below the sacred order; how much more then ought you to believe me faithful in all things when raised to the office of the priesthood?" When the archbishop had spoken many wholesome words full of love and faith, the king still vehemently insisted that he

should utterly abandon the expression *salvo ordine*, the which since he could in no wise obtain, and the archbishop persisting inflexibly in his decision, they departed.

The " many wholesome words " were so many irritants, and the sermon was of no avail. Henry, honestly and naturally, regarded Thomas's insistence on his duty and obligation to God as nauseous hypocrisy, the mere excuse for rebellion and personal ambition. But he was wrong.

Shortly after his return from Northampton an emissary came to the Archbishop from the Pope, urging the wisdom of making such concessions as would secure peace in England and the English Church. It was suggested that the king merely required a formal submission, and Thomas was advised to submit, both by Robert of Melun, one of the oldest of his friends, and Henry of Winchester, the *doyen* of the English bishops. After great hesitation he agreed, and going to the king at Oxford he gave his promise to obey the ancient customs of the kingdom, withdrawing the words *salvo ordine suo*, and substituting the comparatively colourless *in bono*. Henry regarded the concession as a submission, a victory which must be driven home and made complete.

Without delay he summoned a council to meet at Clarendon specifically to define the law of England as regards the jurisdiction of the secular and ecclesiastical courts. The council met at a royal hunting lodge near Salisbury from January 13 to January 28, 1164. It was attended by the two Archbishops, eleven bishops, and a large number of the barons. The bishops were asked formally to pledge themselves to obey the "customs". Becket hesitated, but at last he promised with the rest. The promise having been given, the king then proceeded to produce a long document in which the "customs", to which the bishops were already pledged, were set out at length. They may have imagined that the pledge was indefinite. They soon discovered that it was very definite indeed. The document, the Constitutions of Clarendon, had been drawn up by the royal Justiciar. As they played a part of supreme importance in Becket's life, it is necessary to print the Constitutions in full :

I. Of the advowson and presentation to churches : if any dispute shall arise between laics, or between clerks and laics, or between clerks, let it be tried and decided in the court of our lord the king.

II. Churches of the king's fee shall not be given in perpetuity without his consent and licence.

III. Clerks accused of any crime shall be sum-

moned by the king's justice into the king's court to answer there for whatever the king's court shall determine they ought to answer there ; and in the ecclesiastical court, for whatever it shall be determined that they ought to answer there ; yet so that the king's justice shall send into the court of holy Church to see in what way the matter shall there be handled ; and if the clerk shall confess or be convicted, the Church for the future shall not protect him.

IV. No archbishop, bishop, or other exalted person shall leave the kingdom without the king's licence ; and if they wish to leave it, the king shall be empowered, if he pleases, to take security from them, that they will do no harm to the king or kingdom, either in going or remaining, or in returning.

V. Persons excommunicated are not to give bail, *ad remanentiam*, nor to make oath, but only to give bail and pledge that they will stand by the judgement of the church where they are absolved.

VI. Laics shall not be accused, save by certain and legal accusers and witnesses in presence of the bishop, so that the archdeacon may not lose his rights, or anything which accrues to him therefrom. And if those who are arraigned are such that no one is willing or dares to accuse them, the sheriff, on demand from the bishop, shall cause twelve loyal men of the village to swear before the bishop that they will declare the truth in that matter according to their conscience.

VII. No one who holds of the king in chief, nor any of his domestic servants, shall be excommunicated, nor his lands be put under an interdict, until the king shall be consulted, if he is in the kingdom ; or, if he is abroad, his justiciary, that he may do what is right in that matter, and so that whatever

belongs to the king's court may therein be settled, and the same on the other hand of the ecclesiastical court.

VIII. Appeals, if they arise, must be made from the archdeacon to the bishop, and from the bishop to the archbishop ; and if the archbishop shall fail in administering justice, the parties shall come before our lord the king, that by his precept the controversy may be terminated in the archbishop's court, so that it may not proceed further without the consent of our lord the king.

IX. If a dispute shall arise between a clerk and a laic, or between a laic and a clerk about a tenement, which the clerk wishes to claim as eleemosynary, but the laic claims as lay fee, it shall be settled by the declaration of twelve qualified men, through the agency of the king's capital Justice, whether the tenement is eleemosynary or lay fee, in presence of the king's Justice. And if it shall be declared that it is eleemosynary, it shall be pleaded in the ecclesiastical court ; but, if a lay fee, unless both shall claim the tenement of the same bishop or baron, it shall be pleaded in the king's court ; but if both shall claim of that fee from the same bishop or baron, it shall be pleaded in his court, yet so that the same declaration above-named shall not deprive of seizin him who before was seized, until he shall be divested by the pleadings.

X. If any man belonging to a city, castle, borough, or king's royal manor shall be summoned by the archdeacon or bishop to answer for a crime, and shall not comply with the summons, it shall be lawful to place him under an interdict, but not to excommunicate him, until the king's principal officer of that place be informed thereof, that he may justify his appearing to the summons ; and if the king's officer shall fail in that matter, he shall

be at the king's mercy, and the bishop shall forthwith coerce the party accused with ecclesiastical discipline.

XI. The archbishops, bishops, and all other persons of the kingdom who hold of the king in chief, shall hold their possessions of the king as barony, and answer for the same to the king's justices and officers, and follow and observe all the king's customs and rectitudes ; and be bound to be present, in the judgment of the king's court with the barons, like other barons, until the judgement proceeds to mutilation or death.

XII. When an archbishopric, bishopric, abbacy, or priory of the king's domain shall be vacant, it shall be in his hand, and he shall receive from it all the revenues and proceeds, as of his domains. And when the time shall come for providing for that church, our lord the king shall recommend the best persons to that church, and the election shall be made in the king's chapel, with the king's consent, and the advice of the persons of the kingdom whom he shall have summoned for that purpose. And the person elected shall there do homage and fealty to our lord the king, as to his liege lord, of life and limb, and of his earthly honours saving his orders, before he is consecrated.

XIII. If any of the king's nobles shall have refused to render justice to an archbishop or bishop or archdeacon, for himself or any of his men, our lord the king shall justice them. And if by chance any one shall have deforced our lord the king of his rights, the archbishops, bishops, and archdeacons shall justice him, that he may render satisfaction to the king.

XIV. The chattels of those who are in forfeiture to the king shall not be detained by the church or the cemetery, in opposition to the king's

justice, for they belong to the king, whether they are found in the Church or without.

XV. Pleas for debts which are due, whether with the interposition of a pledge of faith or not, belong to the king's court.

XVI. The sons of rustics shall not be ordained without the consent of the lord in whose land they are known to have been born.

The Constitutions must be somewhat carefully considered if the events of Becket's later years are to be understood. The first clause, which refers to questions of patronage, implies the surrender of a right that had belonged to the Church since the time of William the Conqueror, although, as Dean Hutton suggests, the surrender was of no great importance. The third concerns the real matter in dispute between the Church and the crown. It deprives the cleric of his right to be tried only by his peers, and makes him subject to two courts, from both of which he may receive punishment. This was the proposal to which Becket, with a fine sense of justice, took particular exception. The criminous clerk could, under the Constitutions of Clarendon, be punished twice for the same offence. Professor Maitland says that this is not implied, but Dr. Hutton's careful analysis makes it clear to me that Maitland is wrong and that Becket's position

was completely justified. The fourth clause, forbidding Church dignitaries to leave the country without the consent of the king, was another serious blow at the liberty of the Church, intended, of course, to prevent frequent consultations with the Pope, and designed to make the Church in England a semi-independent insular institution, powerless to resist an autocratic king. Henry II. intended what Henry VIII. achieved.

The seventh clause, in which the Church is forbidden to excommunicate the king's tenants and his servants, was a third limitation of ecclesiastical authority which could not be admitted, since it definitely placed the spiritual authority in subjection to the temporal authority in spiritual matters. And the last clause, preventing the ordination of the sons of the poor, was an intolerable aristocratic affront to the Divine Institution, the first ministers of which had been recruited from the fishermen of Galilee. The twelfth clause, which ensured the revenues of vacant sees to the crown, did no more than register an accepted, if an evil, custom, and the rest of the Constitutions the bishops might have accepted without any radical qualification.

There was no doubt then, and there is no doubt now, of Henry's intention. The Con-

stitutions were drawn up with a clever purpose, acutely summarised by Mrs. J. R. Green, who certainly writes with no prejudice in favour of Becket. She says :

> They boldly attacked the whole of the pretensions of the Church ; they threatened to rob it of a mass of financial business, to wrest from its control an enormous amount of property, to deprive it of jurisdiction in the great majority of criminal suits, to limit its power of irresponsible self-government, and to prevent its absorption into the vast organisation of the Church of Western Christendom. They defined the relations of the English Church to the see of Rome. They established its position as a national Church, and declared that its clergy should be brought under the rule of national law.

The Constitutions were a direct blow at the catholicity of the Catholic Church, and as such they called for the resistance of a prince of that Church. But the Archbishop had been lured into a false position. He had pledged himself to obey the king's " customs ". Now it was difficult to withdraw. The bishops, indeed, were surrounded by armed retainers of the king, and were warned that murder would be the consequence of belated refusal. So Thomas protested and repeated his promise. Then he was required to set his seal to the document, and this he flatly refused. " Never ", he said, " while life is in this earthly vessel ". And then very

sadly, for he felt that he had failed in courage and had been false to his trust, he made his way out of the hall, carrying the document in his hand, amid the murmurs of the faithful. One voice, indeed, was raised in loud protest, that of Alexander Llewellyn, the Archbishop's Welsh cross-bearer, who shouted to his master: "To-day thou hast altogether betrayed both conscience and fame, and, having left to posterity an example hateful to God and contrary to justice, thou hast stretched out thine hands to observe impious customs and hast joined wicked ministers of Satan to the destruction of ecclesiastical liberty". Becket heard and admitted the justice of Alexander's charge, and, as he rode to Winchester, he determined that, as an acknowledgement of his unworthiness, he would neither say Mass nor perform any other priestly act until he had obtained absolution. "I will sit silent in grief until the day star shall visit me from afar."

Absolution came from the Pope in a letter, in which he said: "For your intention gives the meaning to your deed: for as it is written in another place, 'Inasmuch as voluntary evil is sin, unless it be voluntary it is not sin'". In this letter Alexander showed a certain sympathy with the Archbishop in his

troubles, but almost at the same time, he sent to the king a letter appointing Roger of York the papal legate, with the request, of no great value, that the king should not forward it to Roger without Becket's knowledge and consent. The Pope also failed to take any steps to compel the rebellious Foliot to obedience to his primate.

Policy now dictated a temporary flight from the country, in spite of the Constitutions of Clarendon, for personal consultations with the Pontiff. Twice Thomas attempted to cross the Channel and twice he failed, the first time because of the weather, and the second time because he was recognised by the sailors, who feared the king's anger and refused to continue the voyage. In March 1164, soon after these unsuccessful adventures, Becket met the king at Woodstock. "And so, my lord, you wish to leave my kingdom," said Henry. "I suppose that it is not large enough to contain us both." For a few months there was peace, but Becket had no illusions. He had a thorough knowledge of Henry, and he must have been convinced that he would be content with nothing less than the complete destruction of the prelate who had dared to oppose him. But he waited with patience, devoting his time to the

duties of his see. Herbert of Bosham has left a description of his activities in this short period of calm in a storm-swept life :

> The archbishop, supported by apostolic authority and exhortation, being fervent in spirit soon shook himself out and with the prophet's mattock he plucked up, pulled down, scattered, and rooted out whatsoever he found planted amiss in the garden of the Lord. His hand rested not, his eye spared not; whatsoever was naughty, whatsoever rough, whatsoever crooked, he not only assailed with the prophet's mattock, but with the axe of the Gospel he cut it down. Of the royal and ecclesiastical customs, he observed such as were good : but those which had been brought in for the dishonour of the clergy, he pruned away as bastard slips, that they might not strike their roots deep.

Henry took his time. The case against the Archbishop was carefully prepared. As the head of the Church, Becket had fought the king, and had prevented him from gaining a complete victory. It was now as an individual that he was to be assailed and, if possible, humiliated. John FitzGilbert, a baron of great influence and evil reputation, began a suit in the Archbishop's court for the possession of the manor of Pageham in Sussex, claimed by the Archbishop as his property. When, as was probably anticipated, it seemed clear that FitzGilbert would fail in the court at Canterbury, he applied to have the case

transferred to the royal court at Westminster, and Becket received a summons himself to attend at Westminster on September 14, 1164. The summons was an affront, and Becket contented himself with sending a statement of the case in writing. This action again must have been anticipated. But it was used as an excuse by the king to order the Archbishop to attend a council at Northampton on October 6, 1164. The order was another deliberate insult, since it was not as primate of England but as a breaker of the law that Becket's presence was demanded.

The affront was met with appropriate dignity. The Archbishop proceeded to Northampton in state, attended by the retinue proper to his great office, but only to find that no accommodation had been prepared for his followers. The intended humiliation was again countered, and the king was informed that the Archbishop would return at once to Canterbury unless a proper lodging were provided for himself and his suite. Henry as a persecutor was certainly mean and little-minded. The next day, when the Archbishop waited on the king, he was kept in the waiting-room as if he were a person of no account, and when he was actually admitted into the presence, he was refused the kiss of salutation.

On the 8th the suit began. The council was attended by an unusually large number of barons, who outvoted the bishops, and Becket was found guilty of contempt in neglecting the summons to Westminster. He was fined three hundred pounds, and to make the punishment the more bitter, his friend Henry of Winchester was compelled to deliver the sentence. Becket protested and submitted. But no sooner was this first charge disposed of than others, much more serious, were made against him, charges affecting his honour during his chancellorship. The king demanded an account of a sum of three hundred pounds received by him as Warden of Eye and Berkhampstead. It will be remembered that before his consecration as Archbishop, Thomas had received a quittance for all that had happened during his chancellorship. But the king, with his ever growing venom, ignored this quittance. Becket declared that the three hundred pounds, with much more of his own money, had been spent on the castles at Eye and Berkhampstead and on the Tower of London, but " he was utterly unwilling that a matter of money should cause any contention " between him and the king, and agreed to repay. But this was only a beginning. On Friday, October 9, he was

required to refund a thousand marks, either lent him by the king or borrowed on the royal security, to equip the force that he had led to Toulouse, and he was also required to account for all the moneys that he had received from the revenues of bishoprics vacant during his chancellorship, and to refund the immense sum of thirty thousand marks. It was now quite clear the king intended the Archbishop's ruin, and his enemies were exultant. "Every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted", said Hilary of Chichester, exultingly, "shall be rooted up." Henry of Winchester suggested a compromise, and Becket offered the king two thousand marks, which he refused. Others advised him to bow to the king's will and resign his see.

On the Monday Becket was very ill. "His reins trembled with cold and pain, and it was necessary to heat pillows and apply them to his side." But on the Tuesday he was his own man again. Early in the morning he received the suffragans and upbraided them for their disloyalty. "Be assured of one thing," he said, "though enemies shall press hard upon me, and the world itself be against me; though this frail body yield to persecution, because all flesh is weak; yet shall my spirit never yield, nor will I ever by

God's mercy turn my back in flight or basely desert the flock committed to my care."

Then the Archbishop, threatened by a great king, turned to the common people who trusted him, and whom that king would have shut out from the service of the Church. In full pontificals, with the pallium, only worn on occasions of great importance, he himself sang Mass at the altar of St. Stephen. The church was filled with sobs when the Archbishop chanted the Introit, " Princes also did sit and speak against me ". The courage for which he and his people prayed came to him in full measure, and when he turned to give the benediction there was determination in his eye, and taut erectness in his figure, while his face, it was said, seemed like the face of a man and was the face of a lion. After Mass he proceeded to the king's court in the habit of a canon regular, the streets being lined with the people kneeling and asking for his blessing.

At the castle gate he took his cross from the cross-bearer, since beneath the cross there was sanctuary, and made his way to the king's presence, but not without further insult. His old enemy Foliot claimed the right to act as cross-bearer of the primate. Becket refused. " The man ", muttered the

gloomy Foliot, " always was a fool and ever will be." He tried to snatch the cross from Becket, and something like a scuffle took place, of which the Archbishop had the better. Then Thomas entered the council hall, and took his seat amid an uncomfortable and menacing silence. The king was not present, and, one by one, the bishops and barons were summoned into another apartment until Becket and his chaplains, watched by the royal guard, sat shunned and alone.

At last a deputation came from the king to say that he had learned from the bishops that the Archbishop had ignored the Constitutions of Clarendon and had appealed to the Pope. Was this true ? Without hesitating Becket declared, " I place my person and the Church of Canterbury under the protection of God and of my lord the Pope ". Courage had its invariable result—consternation among the time-serving and the timorous. Men came to him in twos and threes urging compliance. Even Roger of York appealed to him, properly to be met with the comment, " Hence, Satan ! " Another pause and the bishops returned in a body, headed by Hilary of Chichester, and declared that Thomas had perjured himself, and that they would no longer obey a perjured prelate.

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Becket's answer was stern and still uncompromising :

I hear what you say, my lords, and will meet you on the day of appeal ; but what took place at Clarendon was done *saving the honour of the Church*. For, as you yourselves have just admitted, we attached three conditions to our promise, by which our ecclesiastical dignities are safe. For whatever is against the faith of the Church, and the laws of God, cannot " in good faith " or " lawfully " be done ; nor can the " dignity " of a king consist in destroying the liberty of the Church, which he has sworn to defend. But, besides all this, the king sent his royal dignities, as you term them, to be confirmed by the Pope, and they came back not confirmed but annulled. This is an example which the holy father has given us to imitate. If we fell at Clarendon (for all flesh is weak), we should resume our courage, and again contend with our foe, in the strength of God's Holy Spirit. If we pledged ourselves to what was unlawful ; you well know that an unlawful oath is not binding.

There was a second long pause, the bishops standing uncomfortable and shamefaced in a fidgety group on one side of the hall, till the door again opened to admit a procession of barons, headed by the Justiciar, who cited at length the royal charges against the Archbishop, who listened to the charges but refused to hear the sentence. There had been no trial, there could be no judgement ! " Now will I depart ", he said, " for the hour

is past". And, disregarding angry protests and timid counsels, again raising his cross and followed by Herbert of Bosham, he walked slowly, with his head erect, from the hall. In the courtyard he mounted a horse and rode out of the gate, to be met by vociferous cheers from the people, who had feared that they might never see him again. He made his way through the crowd slowly, giving his blessing right and left, riding in triumph, comforted and fortified by the trust of the poor. And when he supped in the monastery of St. Andrew's, where he stopped, the passage read by the reader contained the sentence, "When they persecute in one city flee to another".

The next morning after matins he journeyed through a storm to Lincoln, finally arriving at Sandwich on All Souls' Day. From there he put out in a boat with two priests, who must have been no mean sailors, for that same night they landed on the coast of France.

CHAPTER VI

THOMAS THE EXILE

THOMAS had fled to the Continent and the Pope, and for all his loudly expressed contempt of popes and archbishops, Henry was not a little apprehensive as to what might happen. The children of this world are always fearful when pitted against the children of light. The king, therefore, hurried an embassy across the Channel in the hope that his spokesmen would reach Sens before Thomas, and that Alexander might be made familiar with the case for the king before he heard the plaint of the Archbishop. At the head of the embassy were Thomas's two arch enemies, Roger, Archbishop of York, who had attempted to usurp the privileges of Canterbury, and Gilbert, Bishop of London, who had declined to obey the legitimate orders of his ecclesiastical superior.

After the journey across the Channel, Thomas landed in France worn and weary

and sad. Years before he had crossed to France at the head of a gorgeous diplomatic mission from one sovereign to another. Now almost alone, he scrambled over the rocks and was glad to hire a donkey on which, with a straw rope for a bridle, he rode to the Cistercian Abbey of Clairmarais, near St. Omer, where he arrived two days after he had left Sandwich. Here he met the faithful Herbert of Bosham, who had brought over some of his servants, his plate, money for his journey and apparel suitable for his dignity. Becket at once wrote a long letter to the Pope. He claimed that he was fighting the battle of the whole Church against the illegitimate ambition of all secular princes. " The cause of the Church would have sunk before the rapacity of princes ", he said, " if I had not faced the coming evil." He had been cited before a royal tribunal as if he were a layman. His brother bishops had deserted him. He had been compelled to appeal to the head of the Church for protection, " a course the more defensible since your privileges, Holy Father, are at stake ". He had nothing but scorn for the " refined sophistry " of the bishops, whose first duty was obedience to him. Indeed it was against his rebellious diocesans, even more than against the king,

that Thomas's wrath was turned. His letter concludes: "Put forth your severity and coerce those who have stirred up this persecution, but lay it not at the king's door; he is the instrument rather than the author of these machinations".

Becket's anger was natural enough, and was certainly not unprovoked. None the less his summary of the situation was obviously written much more with the desire to punish rebellion than with any excessive yearning to be meticulously accurate in his facts. Certainly Henry II. was not the mere tool of intriguing and ambitious bishops, and certainly Thomas never supposed that he was. The letter was carried to Sens by Herbert of Bosham, who had a personal interview with the Pope before he saw the king's representatives. Alexander was sympathetic, and there is no truth in the suggestion of one historian that he had "but limited sympathy with the fiery zealot". As I have said before, the Pope was as Hildebrandian as Thomas, but he was compelled to frequent concession and compromisé by the appalling difficulties of his pontificate. Reporting his interview at Sens, Herbert wrote:

> He listened with paternal compassion as we told of his son the archbishop's hardships, dangers and

griefs, perils in that fight with beasts at Northampton, perils among false brethren, perils in flight, perils in the way, perils in the sea and even in the harbour, his labour, want and distress, and his change of garment and name to avoid the snares of his enemies. And when he heard these things the father of all fathers was moved with compassion towards his son, and could not restrain his paternal love, but wept and said to us, " Your lord yet lives in the flesh, as ye say : yet while still living in the flesh he can claim the privilege of martyrdom."

On his way from St. Omer to Sens, Herbert of Bosham had been received by Louis VII., whose devotion to the Church and persistent loyalty to the exiled Pontiff inclined him to active sympathy with Thomas. He assured the Archbishop's envoy that his master might be certain of peace and security while he stayed in France, and he added that it was the ancient glory of the French crown " to defend and protect exiles and especially ecclesiastics from all persecution ". Louis expressed himself even more clearly to Henry's envoys when they waited on him at Compiègne. In the letter that they brought to him from Henry, Thomas was described as " formerly archbishop ", and on reading this, Louis commented that " he, at least as great a king as Henry, had not the power to depose the least of the clerks in his realm ".

Having been thoroughly snubbed by the

French king, the English envoys proceeded to put their case as clumsily as possible when they saw the Pope. Gilbert of London, a prelate without tact if not without guile, began with the particularly banal suggestion that the quarrel between the king and the Archbishop was " a slight and unimportant occasion ". He went on to urge that there was no reason whatever why the Archbishop should have fled from the country, and the cause for the flight to France was to be found in the text : " The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth ". This brought down on his head a very stern remonstrance, and the faithful Herbert records that " the bishop was struck with foolishness by the Lord so that he could say no more ". Hilary of Chichester took up the story, and after him the Archbishop of York and his lordship of Exeter prayed that legates might be appointed to hear the case between the king and the Archbishop.

The lay delegates were far more tactful. The Earl of Arundel, speaking with " modest discreetness ", assured his Holiness of the king's devotion to Holy Church. No one was more anxious for peace, no one more eager to serve God. As to the Archbishop of Canterbury, he was " none the less perfect

in his own rank and order, he was prudent and discreet". "But", added the Earl, "as it seems to some a little too sharp". It was lamentable that there should be dissension between the king and the Archbishop, and they had come to beg the Pope to restore peace and amity. To this graceful speech, Alexander at once replied that he would appoint legates, and, having made their obeisance, the envoys withdrew to decide whether they had gained a victory or not.

It was understood that the issue turned on the Cardinals whom the Pope appointed, and it was decided to buy the judges, and to secure from Alexander a pledge that their decision should be final. To obtain this a heavy bribe was offered in the form of Peter's pence, but nothing would induce Alexander to surrender the right of appeal to the papal throne. "That", he said decisively, "is my glory which I will not give to another". Nor would he agree to order Thomas back to England to be judged by his enemies. So Gilbert and his fellows, angry and disappointed, returned to England, "their hope being frustrated".

Four days later Becket himself arrived at Sens, where his effigy is to be seen to-day in the cathedral. He had no rich gifts to bring

to the sovereign Pontiff, but in their place he laid at his feet a copy of the Constitutions of Clarendon, the cause of the strife with the king and of his exile. The Constitutions were considered for half a day, the cause for the king being put by Cardinal William of Pavia. Becket loved argument, and he set out the reasons for his opposition to the king's will with admirable skill. "As if he were Solomon he pleadeth forth his cause with many fair reasons." At the end the Pope congratulated him on his courage in defending the rights of the Church, and solemnly condemned the Constitutions. Six only of the clauses could the Church allow, and it is sad to note that one of them was that which forbade "the sons of rustics to be ordained without the consent of their lord". Becket then resigned his see into the papal hands, and was at once reinstated.

His continued presence at Sens would have been extremely inconvenient. There was still a rival pope in Rome, the nominee of the Emperor, and while he proved over and over again that he was not ready to surrender any fundamental spiritual privilege, Alexander remained reasonably anxious not to antagonise Henry to the point of forcing him into an alliance with the Emperor and to a recognition

of Paschal III. So with the Papal blessing and the Papal present of a rough woollen habit, Becket left Sens on November 30 to find quiet retirement in the Cistercian Abbey of Pontigny.

The failure of his embassy to Sens and the knowledge that the Archbishop had found sanctuary and was not to be lured back to England for punishment, added to the rage of the English king, who celebrated Christmas, with singular inappropriateness, by issuing savage decrees, banishing the Archbishop's kindred and confiscating their possessions. Having punished the Archbishop with this paltry thoroughness, the king proceeded to defy the Pope with an order to the sheriffs that any priest or layman appealing to him should be promptly imprisoned.

Becket remained with the Cistercians at Pontigny from November 1164 to May 1166. There is some confusion as to the manner of his daily life. His eulogists relate that he conformed to the strict Cistercian discipline, eating nothing but coarse food, spending part of his day in manual labour, reading nothing but the Scriptures, suffering frequent flagellations and spending his nights in prayer. There seems no doubt that for the first few months this is an accurate descrip-

tion of his life. Again I note that Becket could never do anything by half, and it was difficult for him not to overdo most things. But " this hard way of living his nature may nowise endure ", and the result was a severe illness and a return, probably unwilling, at his friends' persuasion, to better fare and softer living. In the usual manner of the English, Becket went from one extreme to the other, and in a letter written in July 1165, John of Poictiers urged him to husband his resources and to live " in conformity with your circumstances and condescension to the religious house that entertains you ". The study of the Scriptures had given place to a return to the study of the canon law, which was one of the passions of Becket's life, and this change of mind brought a remonstrance from the saintly and devoted John of Salisbury.

> Who ever arose with a feeling of contrition from a study of the laws or even of canons. The exercises of the schools too are far more likely to puff us up with the pride of science than to kindle within us any feeling of devotion. I would far rather see your lordship's thoughts employed upon the Psalms or on sermons of the Blessed Gregory than intent upon the philosophy of the schools.

During 1165 Becket made more than one

effort to persuade the Pope actively to intervene on his behalf. But Alexander's difficulties had increased, with a consequent increased disinclination on his part to add to the numbers of his enemies. On Whit Sunday Paschal's election as Pope had been confirmed at the Council at Wurzburg, and it was pretended that the English episcopate was ready to recognise him. Henry at once protested that this was false, but Alexander seized the opportunity to make it clear to the English king and the English bishops that he was the true successor of St. Peter, able and willing to exercise his prerogatives. He wrote a sharp letter to Gilbert of London, bidding him exhort the king to mend his ways, to cease his persecutions, and to submit to papal authority. Gilbert was further ordered to add that unless the king showed repentance, " God will most surely visit him with heavy vengeance, for the time must at last come when our patience can no longer endure ". In this same month of June the Pope declared the sentence pronounced on Becket at Northampton to be void, while he warned the Archbishop to be moderate and circumspect.

Writing of the year 1165, Dr. Stubbs says that Becket seems to have been little missed

in England. The great mass of the people, whose love and confidence he certainly possessed, were inarticulate, and their opinions are not recorded in the chronicles. The king's authority was now unchallenged, and, although in the autumn of the year, his attempt to conquer Wales ended in disastrous failure, Henry was strong enough in England to initiate the reforms for which his attempt to destroy the power of the Church was the preparation.

In February 1166, the king issued the famous code of laws known as the Assize of Clarendon. They were the expression of the king's will, and they derived no authority whatever from established custom. The main intention was to put the entire judicial machine within the royal jurisdiction. The king was particularly insistent that gaols should be built all over the country so that no prisoner could possibly escape from the hands of justice. The right of sanctuary was taken from the monastic establishments. Punishment was to be certain, there was to be no more mercy in England. The royal judges at once began their circuits through the country. But it was money and not justice with which the king was concerned, and his judges were not—I quote Mrs. J. R. Green—

" judges administering justice so much as tax gatherers for a needy treasury ". Fines were imposed on individuals and on communities for all manner of fantastic offences and with a perfectly uncanny ingenuity. The rich were relieved of their money, the peasants of their eggs and their fowls. So great was the popular terror that whole villages fled for refuge to the woods when news came to them of the approach of the royal judge. The system was orderly and intelligent and terribly harsh. This is no place to dilate on the importance of the Assize of Clarendon in the legal history of this country, or to trace its effect on the development of English law. At its beginning it marked the triumph of Henry over Thomas.

The old kindly ecclesiastical courts to which litigants, particularly if they were poor and weak, preferred to come had lost most of their power, and the king's ruthless courts took their place. It was the triumph of progress and cruel common sense.

Obedient to the Pope, Thomas chafed in silence until the spring of 1166, when three of his servants saw Henry at Angers on Low Sunday. First, John of Salisbury begged to be allowed to return to England, but declined to obey the Constitutions of Clarendon unless

permitted to do so by the Pope and the Archbishop. After he had withdrawn, Herbert of Bosham was admitted—a tall, handsome man, lacking nothing in courage. He was far bolder, and was even more promptly dismissed. Philip de Calve was luckier. He had tried to keep outside the quarrel but had been deprived of his property, and the king "was persuaded in his favour". These visits were followed up by Becket by the dispatch to Henry of three outspoken letters. Henry, he declared, was both his king and his spiritual son. "In that you are my son I am bound by reason of my office to chasten and correct you. Kings receive their power from the Church, but they have no power to interfere in Church's affairs." Henry is bidden to restore to the Church of Canterbury all its privileges and all the possessions which had been stolen and to permit the return of the Archbishop. "Otherwise know for certain that you shall feel the divine severity and vengeance." There is nothing novel in the theory of the relations of the Church to the temporal sovereign that is set out in these letters. It was taught, and, as I have shown, fully accepted by Anselm and Theobald. Dr. Hutton suggests that Becket for the first time felt it necessary to find support for his own

affairs in a theory backed by the authority of great names. But this implies that he had only just become familiar with the theory that he had learned when he was Theobald's secretary in Canterbury, and which he had studied in detail at Bologna. From the day he was appointed Archbishop he had endeavoured to put it into practice, and on it, from the beginning of his episcopate, he had based all his actions.

Henry's not unexpected reply to the letters was to threaten the Abbot of Pontigny if he permitted Becket to remain any longer in the monastery, and the Archbishop, fearing to bring trouble on his friend, left the quiet retreat, where he had spent the only peaceful months of his life, and journeyed to Vezelay, where at Whitsuntide he solemnly excommunicated certain of his most active enemies, published the Pope's condemnation of the Constitutions of Clarendon, and warned Henry of the fate that awaited him unless he repented.

Becket was now able to rely on the more active help of the Pope, who was back again in Rome, and had found an early opportunity for the open expression of his goodwill. In April he wrote to England declaring that the crowning of English kings was a privilege

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of the Archbishop of Canterbury, not to be usurped by any other prelate, and on Easter Day he addressed a brief to Thomas appointing him papal legate for the whole of England except the see of York. It was therefore with a double authority that Becket spoke at Vezelay, advising the Pope of his action, which was at once confirmed. Archbishop and Pope now stood together.

When Thomas went to Vezelay Henry was at Chinon, ill and considerably perturbed by the course of events. "He feared," said John of Salisbury, "and with reason, that an interdict was to be pronounced against his land and himself excommunicated without further delay under the immediate sanction of the Pope." If the king was apprehensive, the English bishops were in something like terror when the news came to England of Thomas's new offensive. Together they addressed long statements both to the Pope and to the Archbishop, which were dispatched on June 24, a few days before Gilbert of London received official intimation of Becket's appointment as papal legate. To the Pope they repeated much of what had been said personally to him at Sens, reiterating that the quarrel with the king was entirely the Archbishop's fault, and that Henry had been woe-

fully misrepresented. They sent to Thomas a disingenuous statement which the Archbishop read with proper resentment. It began with the expression of the joy that they felt at the news that the Primate in his misfortunes was bearing himself with " modesty and indigence ", and of their sorrow at the news that he was now threatening the king with interdict. They besought him to act with prudence, " not to add toil to toil, injury to injury, but to cease from these threats ". They reminded him that the king had heaped honours on him and had raised him from low estate. Against the advice of his friends it was the king who had made him Archbishop. These things should not be forgotten. Moreover the course the Archbishop was now pursuing was full of peril. " Suppose ", they said, " that by your means and by your exasperation our lord the king (which God forbid !), with so many nations and kingdoms which God has given him, should desert our lord the Pope, and refuse for the future to follow him, because perchance he may not aid him against you." The audacity of the threat is astounding, and appears to suggest the readiness in certain circumstances of the English episcopate to transfer its allegiance from Pope to

anti-pope. The bishops proceeded to fulsome eulogy of the sovereign, and protested against the excommunications.

The appeal to the Pope was in vain, and Henry repeated the bishops' threat, openly stating that he was tired to death of the Pope and his Cardinals, and that if Alexander continued recalcitrant he would carry his kingdoms and his subjects, lay and clerical alike, over to the side of Paschal. The Archbishop replied to the charges made against him in a letter which has been well described as a magnificent manifesto. He was astonished to receive a communication conveying "more of irony than of consolation". He urged his diocesans to "set aside the majesty of royalty and regard to persons of whom God is no accepter". He insisted on his own single-mindedness, and pointed out that in fighting him the bishops were fighting against themselves. As Archbishop of Canterbury he had been compelled by the policy of the king to appeal to the Roman See, and "to place under the protection of God and the Roman Church all the possessions which belonged to him, rather which belonged to the poor, for they are the patrimony of our Crucified Saviour, not given for our use but entrusted to our stewardship". If it

were true that conditions in England had been disturbed by his departure, then the blame must lie with him who compelled the departure. The Archbishop went on to refer to the exiling of his relations, and to the plundering of the Church in his diocese. Part of the plunder was seized by the king, " to your use and to the use of your church, my brother of London, if we have been truly informed ". A very shrewd hit.

He retorted angrily to the charge that he had been raised to the archiepiscopal throne against the will of the Church and the people.

> Good God [he wrote], would not one of the common people blush to say what you have said ? Consult your own consciences, look at the form of election, the consent of all who were concerned therein, the consent of the king expressed through his son and through his emissaries, the consent of his son himself and of all the nobility of the kingdom.

As for his comparatively humble ancestry, " I would rather be the man to whom nobility of mind gives the advantages of birth than one in whom a noble ancestry degenerates ". Was not David taken from among the goats and Peter from his fishing ? He denied that he had been ungrateful to the king. On the contrary, he had shown his gratitude by checking and warning him " as a son with paternal

love ". The excommunications were boldly defended, and the letter concluded :

> We write thus to you, my brethren, not that ye may be put to confusion, but that when ye have read our letter and comprehended its import ye may the more boldly and freely do what duty bids you. May ye so act henceforth that we may the sooner have peace and the Church more ample liberty. Pray for us that our faith may not fail in tribulation, but that we may say with the apostle, " Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor any other creature shall separate us from the love of God ".
>
> Farewell all of you in the Lord ; may the whole English Church remember us daily in their prayers.

Gilbert of London attempted to answer the Archbishop in a communication almost as long. Gilbert was now frankly insolent, and a man in the early part of his career clearly honest was now equally clearly disingenuous. He resented the personal charges made against him, and answered them with a *tu quoque*. It was not he who had endeavoured to obtain promotion " by gifts or services ". The Archbishop had no such untarnished record. When Archbishop Theobald died the king had sent his Justiciar to England to terrify the Canterbury Chapter into accepting Becket as Theobald's successor, while Becket's own " friends and creatures used threats, promises and blandishments to promote it ". The Archbishop to be was then the powerful

Chancellor. "A sword of state was in your hand shedding terror on all whom you might view with an angry eye." His record was well known. Had he not already robbed the Church to pay the expenses of the expedition to Toulouse? At Clarendon the whole episcopate had stood firmly together in their support of the Archbishop. "It was the leader of our chivalry himself who turned his back, the captain of our camp who fled." It was his lordship of Canterbury who had first acceded to the king's demand.

Gilbert went on very ingeniously to misrepresent Becket's attitude at Northampton, suggesting that his consent, on the urging of his friends to bow to the royal will, was in effect a plea of guilty. The carrying of the cross into the hall of trial was an insult to the king. The flight to France was unnecessary. "You showed your anxiety to escape that death with which no one condescended to threaten you." But now the bishops were urged by the Archbishop to rebel against the king with a certainty of punishment. There could be no escape for them. "The ports are closed."

With courtier-like enthusiasm Gilbert proceeded to an eulogy of Henry, uncritical and fulsome, chiding the Archbishop for sending

the letters of denunciation to the king at a time when he was overburdened with the cares of state. And once more Thomas was counselled to put on humility. "May it please you to remember that Our Lord made Zaccheus descend from the sycamore tree before He would enter into his house, and thus should you also descend and strive to pacify the King whom you have offended by offering to give him satisfaction, even though you may have suffered at his hands."

The analogy was not well chosen, and, from every point of view, the bishop showed himself infinitely inferior as a disputant to the Archbishop. Gilbert's letter indeed moved the usually placid John of Salisbury to vehement anger. He regarded it as "dictated by Achitophel himself, come up from below for the destruction of the faithful, and written by a second Doge of Edom thirsting for the blood of Christ and his elect". John bluntly accused Gilbert of lying in his account of Thomas's election to the primacy. "He was the only person who objected to your promotion, because, as may be shown in many ways, he aspired more than all the others to the station which you occupied. Yet he did not dare to murmur long because the others checked his ambition and his impudence."

Referring to the really daring impudence of one of Foliot's suggestions, the scholar wrote: " With what effrontery can the bishops state that the king thinks compliance sweet when he is admonished of his errors ? "

At the end of his letter to Thomas, John of Salisbury warned his friend not to place too much reliance on Rome. The Pope was " a holy and retired man ", but the times were bad, and no man could foretell even the immediate future. The warning was justified. Alexander's position in Rome was very insecure. The Emperor's troops were once again threatening the city. It was absolutely necessary that Henry should be placated. So John of Oxford, the English king's envoy and one of the ecclesiastics whom Becket had excommunicated, was graciously received and his sentence suspended, and in December the Pope wrote to Henry conceding what had been demanded—the appointment of the legates, William of Pavia and Otto of Ostia, with supreme power. William of Pavia was the open enemy of the Archbishop and the friend of the king.

At the beginning of 1167 Becket was living at Sens in the abbey of St. Colombe, defended by the Archbishop and graciously received by the people. He was astounded by the

appointment of the legates, and wrote to the Pope a warm letter of protest. His protests were backed by Louis of France and other important princes and ecclesiastics, and this support must have increased Thomas's determination to use to the utmost his powers of archbishop and legate, despite what must have seemed to him the defection of his chief supporter. Another letter was written to Gilbert of London exhorting him to obedience, while Roger of Worcester was ordered to come to Sens. Both letters were ignored. A harder blow was still to come. Early in the year Alexander had once more been compelled to flee from Rome. Feeling it would be no longer politic to refuse compliance to Henry's request, he gave permission, on June 17, 1167, that Roger, Archbishop of York, might crown the king's son, though a few months before he had insisted that the crowning of an English king was the prerogative of the see of Canterbury.

Thomas was now alone indeed. His temper grew sharper as misfortunes accumulated, and he wrote an impetuous, angry letter to the Papal legates which, however, John of Salisbury persuaded him not to send.

Frederick was crowned Emperor in Rome on August 1, and his creature Paschal III. was

enthroned as Pope, and then with dramatic suddenness the tide turned. A pestilence broke out in the city, the German soldiers died in hundreds, the army fled north, and Alexander returned, soon after to receive a letter from Becket protesting against the choice of William of Pavia as his judge since he could not regard him as an impartial arbitrator, and entreating that the power given to him by the Pope should be revoked. " Have mercy upon our protracted miseries," he prayed, " for all mankind are now looking to see them ended." The plea was not without avail. The Pope warned the legates not to regard their power as unqualified, and with that concession Becket consented to meet them, the legates also having protested to him that they had no other object than to make peace between him and the king " to the honour of God and saving the liberty of the Church ".

The conference was held on the frontiers of France and Normandy. William of Pavia opened the proceedings with " sweet and pleasant speeches ", endeavouring to persuade Becket that if the king agreed to peace without mentioning the customs, " they were thereby understood to be abolished ", an extremely subtle suggestion which Becket quite properly

refused to accept. If they failed with him, they failed still more with Henry, for at the conclusion of a two hours' conversation he exclaimed, " I hope to God I may never again set eyes on the Cardinal ". Afterwards the legates met a deputation of English bishops, going over the old ground, listening to the old charges. In a second audience, granted by Henry, before their departure, he entreated them, it is said, with tears in his eyes, to urge the Pope to rid him once and for all of the intolerable Archbishop. The whole business was for Becket nothing but an exasperating waste of time. The legates came to no decision but that he should be forbidden to excommunicate or issue any interdict. He wrote the usual letter of protest to the Pope, and another very bitter letter to William of Pavia, in which he warned him " that the vicissitudes of things are great, and as the fall from success and triumph is easy so may we also rise again ".

Little of importance happened in the year 1168. Thomas remained at Sens, growing the more resolute as his prospects grew darker, declining translation to another see, and now more intent on the punishment of the king than on the recovery of his own position.

I would rather, God knows [he wrote], submit to any kind of death than that I should myself live in dishonour or that he should escape without receiving from me the punishment, unless he repent, which will be his due.

It was as a hammer of the Lord that he saw himself as he walked through the pleasant streets of Sens and prayed in its cathedral.

Insistent pressure was brought to bear on Alexander by Henry, but with a courage which, in face of his difficulties, was nothing less than heroic, he remained the Archbishop's friend, wrote him kindly letters, and in May appointed a second peace mission. Nothing was done until January 1169. On the feast of the Epiphany the kings of France and England, who had concluded one of their periodic little wars, met in conference at Montmirail, and Thomas was invited to attend the meeting. Standing before the kings he begged for the royal mercy, and added :

On the whole subject, therefore, which lies between us, my lord the king, I throw myself on your mercy, and on your pleasure, here, in presence of our lord, the king of France and of the archbishops, princes, and others who stand round us—saving the honour of my God !

The repetition of the last sentence absolutely maddened Henry. He stormed and

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shouted and denounced the Archbishop as proud, vain, ungrateful, and then proceeded to rake up all the charges made at the Northampton trial. Thomas listened patiently, and replied with dignity that his record as Chancellor proved his fidelity. "Our lord king of the Franks here knows it, all who stand round know it, the whole world knows it, my deeds themselves testify for me." The Archbishop's restraint added fuel to the king's anger. Turning to the king of France he again rehearsed his complaints, adding, and perhaps not unfairly, "Whatever his lordship of Canterbury disapproves he will say is contrary to God's honour, and so he will on all occasions get the advantage of me". The king would make the Archbishop an offer. There had been kings in England before him, some greater, some less. There had been many holy archbishops of Canterbury. Let Thomas agree to behave towards him as the most holy of the archbishops had behaved towards the least of the kings, and he would be satisfied. The offer was melodramatic, but it served the purpose of turning Louis against Becket, whom he had so constantly befriended. "Do you wish to be more than a saint, my lord Archbishop?" he asked. But Becket remained master of him-

self, undeceived and unaffected even by defection. His holy predecessors had extirpated many of the abuses of the Church. "If they had corrected all I should not now be exposed to this hot and fiery trial." His friends interrupted him, urging him to withdraw the phrase at which the king took offence. Bishops joined with nobles in giving the same advice, and even monks echoed their words. But "the mediators of peace seeing him firm and inflexible departed from him, and he was left alone".

After he had returned to Sens, old friends wrote to him also urging concession, but Becket was now confident of success. Louis had sent for him and begged forgiveness on his knees. The Pope's legates were openly on his side. In February the Pope himself wrote a strong letter to the English king, and the English bishops once more became afraid. In order to ward off the anticipated excommunication, Gilbert of London and Jocelin of Salisbury appealed to the Pope to protect them against Becket's anger. But there could be no appeal before a sentence, and on Palm Sunday, April 13, 1169, Thomas formally excommunicated both bishops, warning other dignitaries that the same sentence would be passed on them on Ascension Day.

In his letter to Gilbert the Archbishop said:

> You have abused our patience and would not listen to the Pope or ourselves in the advice which concerned your salvation. But your obstinacy has become worse and worse until with regard to our sacred duty and to the requirements of the law we have for just and manifest causes passed sentence of excommunication on you and cut you off from Christ's body which is the Church until you make condign satisfaction.

The sentence was delivered to the celebrant at High Mass at St. Paul's on Easter Day. Gilbert protested that no bishop can be excommunicated before the offence is proved of which he is accused, and Henry described the excommunication as an outrage, and gave Gilbert permission to proceed to Rome to appeal to the Pope. Further excommunications, however, were, as Thomas had threatened, delivered on Ascension Day, and with them came the definite threat of an interdict the next year.

Whatever may have been the feelings of the English bishops, Henry never thought of submission. On Michaelmas Day he sent orders from Normandy to England that any person found "bearing letters of the lord Pope or any mandate of the Archbishop of Canterbury containing an interdict against

England" should be arrested as a traitor. No one was to be allowed to leave England or to return to it without a licence from the king or his Justiciar. Appeals to the Pope or the Archbishop were forbidden. If the sentence of interdict were formulated, all persons who observed it should be driven from the land with all their kindred and their goods confiscated. Priests with preferments in England were ordered at once to return or their revenues would be seized by the king, and in future it was ordered that Peter's pence should be paid into the Royal treasury. These decrees were a bluff, and the clergy, compliant as they had hitherto been, with Roger of York as their spokesman, made it clear to the king that they could not possibly obey his arbitrary orders or surrender their obedience to the Pope, nor, however much they might deplore the Archbishop's action, could they ignore the excommunication of the Bishop of London. Not one of them would join in Gilbert's appeal to Rome. Not one of them would hold communion with him.

No man ever more thoroughly hated being beaten than Henry of Anjou, and no man was ever quicker to realise when he was beaten. And conscious that this time he had blundered,

he arranged for yet another meeting with Becket. It took place at Montmartre on November 18, 1169.

King and Archbishop met, with the French king, the representative of the Pope, and the Archbishop of Rouen, in the chapel of the Martyrs on the hill outside Paris, where so much history has since been made, and which is now crowned by the monstrous church of the Sacré Cœur. The Archbishop had consulted the Pope as to the conditions that he should demand before he agreed to return to England, and the Pope advised that a prelate could not demand a pledge from a king, and that all that was necessary was that he should receive the kiss of peace. The conference was amicable, and Henry agreed to all that the Archbishop asked concerning the restoration of Church property, while on Becket's part there was no mention of the fatal words, *salvo honore Dei*. But there was no kiss of peace, and even the generally unsuspicious Louis realised that "under the honeyed words which had hitherto passed between them, they had perhaps been made to drink poison".

When Louis suspected it was not likely that Thomas was deceived, and he insisted that there could be no peace without the kiss of peace, and this brought the conference

to an end, Henry riding off in hot haste to Mantes, cursing the Archbishop and all his works. Thomas and his attendants were lodged in the Temple, and as they left the chapel, going their way down the hill, one of his people said to him, " My lord, this day's conference has been held in the Chapel of the Martyrdom, and I fear that nothing but your martyrdom will ever ensure peace to the Church ". And the Archbishop replied, " God grant that she may be freed even if by my blood ".

That night even the clerks and secretaries in Thomas's employ protested against his obstinacy, which meant a continuance of their exile. It appeared to them idiotic to insist on a meaningless kiss. They did not understand. But Thomas did.

In January 1170 the Pope appointed a third mission, with instructions to demand from Henry the kiss of peace for Becket and the restoration of Church property, and to add that if the papal commands were not obeyed within forty days, an interdict would be pronounced on Henry's Continental possessions. If he obeyed, Becket's excommunications would be absolved, and, as a proof of his goodwill and an incentive to the king, Foliot's excommunication was as a

matter of fact formally absolved on Easter Day. Becket was furious at the last diplomatic concession, for he, alas for himself, was no diplomat. Once more Rome had failed him. "I know now", he wrote, "how it is that in the court of Rome the Lord's side is always sacrificed, that Barabbas escapes and Christ is slain."

Henry returned to England on March 3, after another absence of four years, to achieve the greatest autocratic triumph of his reign. The country was seething with discontent, and in order to stave off rebellion the king made a clean sweep of all the royal administrators, replacing great nobles with humbler men, on whose fidelity he believed he could count. On April 10 a council was called in London to arrange the coronation of his son. No heir to the throne had ever been crowned before in England. But Henry cared nothing for precedent, and in defiance of an order of the Pope and pretending to rely on a form of permission which had been revoked, Roger of York crowned the young prince in Westminster Abbey on June 14. This act roused a storm of protest all through the kingdom. Cautious prelates like old Henry of Winchester who had endeavoured to remain neutral now became open partisans

of the Archbishop, whose prerogative had been so arbitrarily disregarded. The French king protested. The wrath of the common people was aroused, and Henry, fearing trouble, returned to France on June 24. At Falaise he met his kinsman, Roger, Bishop of Worcester, and bitterly upbraided him for failing to appear at the coronation, but in the evening he and Roger had a long private conversation, and, at long last, Henry was persuaded that at any price Thomas must be induced to return to his see.

It may well be that the ruthless king had already a shrewd idea of what would happen to the Archbishop after the return, but for the moment it was the return that mattered. The two men met once more on July 22 near Chartres, and Thomas was able to report to the Pope that peace had at last been made. The king said nothing about the Constitutions of Clarendon, demanded no oath, agreed to surrender the Church property which he had appropriated. He treated the Archbishop with deference, accepted rebuke with patience, and when Becket sprang from his horse and would have knelt at his feet he compelled him to remount, begging for the restoration of the old affectionate terms. "Let each show the other", the king said, "what good

he can and be forgetful of the former hatred." In the evening they gossiped with at least a pretence of the old familiarity, but the Archbishop had misgivings, and his friends still more.

When he took leave of Louis, the French king, who had sad reason to know his brother of England, warned him not to cross the Channel and invited him to remain permanently in France with the assurance, " So long as King Louis lives never shall you lack the wine, the food, and the riches of Gaul ". And when the Bishop of Paris kissed him farewell Thomas said quite simply, " I go into England to die ". He went to King Henry at Tours on October 12, and in order to avoid giving him the kiss of peace at Mass, for Henry seems to have had a superstitious horror of playing Judas, it was arranged that the Mass should be a Requiem. When they parted the king said, " Go in peace. I will follow you and see you in England as soon as I can." To which the Archbishop replied, " My lord, it seems that I depart from you as from him who in this life I shall see no more ".

Becket landed at Sandwich on December 1, even the sailors on the boat on which he crossed warning him of the fate that awaited him.

CHAPTER VII

THOMAS THE MARTYR

Becket came home to die. He was weary of exile and hungry for his own land, for, cosmopolitan though he was and living in a cosmopolitan age, Becket was an Englishman who loved England and the English. He had grown utterly weary of the comparative impotence imposed upon him by his distance from his see. He had determined to return to Canterbury, whatever the risk, and he knew that the risk was very great. The king's attitude to him had been made abundantly clear before he left France. He went with his eyes open from the protection of powerful friends to deliver himself into the hands of powerful enemies.

He had first to reckon on the open hostility of the secular officials who governed England in the long absences of Henry II., the men who, in the name of his young son, had carried out the Plantagenet "reforms" in

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administration, who thoroughly realised how unpopular those " reforms " were, who knew that the poor and the oppressed regarded Becket as a possible protector, and who feared that his presence in England would stimulate discontent and possibly excite revolt. It was not as the defender of the rights of the Church that they feared Becket, but as the defender of the rights of the poor. With them was the majority of the bishops whom Becket had bitterly described as " the standard bearers of the Balaamites ". Roger of Salisbury, Gilbert of London, and the rest might perhaps have been propitiated, and a patched-up peace might possibly have been effected, but only by the surrender by Becket of certain of the rights and privileges of his archiepiscopal see, none of which he was prepared to forgo. It was for his office that he was concerned, not for himself. He was Primate of England and Apostolic Legate, and he regarded it as a fundamental matter for the Church that the supremacy of its head in England should be firmly established.

While he was still on the Continent, Becket let his opponents know that he had no thought of compromise. On November 24 he sent letters to England suspending the Archbishop of York and re-affirming the excommunica-

tions of the Bishops of London and Salisbury. These prelates had anticipated some such step, and they had persuaded the civil authorities to watch the ports that any letters that Becket sent into the country might be intercepted, while they hurried to the king to beg that at the last moment the Archbishop's return to England might be forbidden. As it happened, the letters were delivered to the bishops at Dover while they were waiting to cross the Channel.

Becket had supposed that if the king's new protestations of friendship were sincere, he himself would accompany him to England, and it was a clear suggestion of what was to follow, when Henry wrote that he was detained by urgent affairs and that he was sending John of Oxford, one of Becket's most constant foes, as his representative.

With his enemy by his side, and with his primatal cross, the symbol of victory after sorrow, used as an ensign at the mast-head of his ship, Becket once more saw the cliffs of Kent. Other enemies awaited him on the beach at Sandwich. The sheriff of Kent and Ranulf de Broc, the ruffian who had seized, under the warrant of the king, the archiepiscopal lands, and had been the chief instrument in the persecution of the Arch-

bishop's kindred, were there with armed guards to demand that, before he landed, Becket should absolve the excommunicated bishops. So blustering were they that John of Oxford, fearing that their violence might bring " infamy on the king ", pleaded with them not to prevent the landing which Henry had specifically sanctioned. But even without his mediation no harm would have happened to the Archbishop, for, as he afterwards wrote to the Pope, " the people rejoicing at our return would have proved the stronger if force had been used ".

The Kentish peasants, who loved him, crowded the beach and hustled the sheriff's guards ; fishermen ran into the water to have the honour of drawing the boat to land ; men and women and children knelt on the shingle begging his blessing as he landed—the great crowd pressed round him, throwing their cloaks on to the beach that his feet might not be made wet, and with tears in their eyes shouted together : " Blessed is the father of orphans, the judge of widows, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ". And as Becket stood there with his own people with him, blessing them left and right, noting with ironic amusement the angry faces of robber Ranulf and the king's sheriff, he

must have felt that the death to which he was going was a death worth dying.

The journey from Sandwich to Canterbury was one long triumph. In every village Thomas was met by priest and people begging his blessing and repeating the cry, " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ". It is only twelve miles from Sandwich to Canterbury, but the journey took a whole day, and the enthusiasm of the countryside was merely a suggestion of the happy rejoicing that awaited him in his cathedral city. The cathedral itself had been decorated, the people crowded the streets, wearing their best clothes, " silks and costly array ", as was meet on the feast of reunion, and, remembering the Archbishop's sympathy, a great banquet had been prepared for the poor.

Outside the city Thomas was met by the monks and canons of the cathedral, who escorted him in solemn procession, " with the reverence and veneration due to their father ", through the city. Trumpets sounded at his approach, and the monks sang hymns and psalms as they walked, as monks had centuries before sung hymns and psalms when Augustine made the same journey from the coast.

Becket could never control his feelings.

When he was angry he spoke angrily. When he was happy his happiness was obvious. He was indeed a man who wore his heart on his sleeve, and on this day when, as Herbert of Bosham says, " Christ's poor received him as the Lord's anointed ", it seemed " as though his heart aflame showed also in his face ". He made his entry into the cathedral amidst the clanging of the bells of all the city's churches. For a while he lay prostrate in prayer before the altar, and then, taking his seat on his throne, he received the clergy one by one, giving each his blessing. Even in his own city there had been some who were unfaithful to him, but on this triumphal day all was forgiven. And yet as he sat there, with the aisles of the great cathedral crowded with the faithful, with his children returned to their obedience, Thomas still saw the writing on the wall. " Now, my lord," said Herbert of Bosham, " it is no matter when you depart hence, for in you to-day the Bride of Christ has won the victory. Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ rules." But the Archbishop did not answer him. He preached a sermon in the Chapter House from the text, " Here we have no continuing city but we seek one to come ", and afterwards, while the rejoicings went on in the city, the

Archbishop went to his palace, " thus having finished that joyful and solemn day ".

But while joy endured for the night, trouble began early in the morning. The sheriff and Ranulf de Broc once more demanded the absolution of the bishops. Becket replied that the excommunications had been ordered by the Pope, and that an inferior judge could not loosen the sentence of a superior. They threatened him that unless he complied the king would do " marvellous and stupendous things to him ", and at last he said that if the bishops would make their submission to him and reaffirm their loyalty to the Papal see, he would take the responsibility of giving them absolution. Roger of York, however, in Becket's phrase, " that enemy of peace and a disturber of the Church ", dissuaded his brethren from making the submission which Becket had quite legitimately demanded. He urged that they should carry out the original intention of going to the king to beg for his protection. At the same time he sent messengers to Prince Henry warning him that Becket threatened to depose his rebellious suffragans.

It was soon made clear to Thomas that, despite the king's pledge, there was no real intention to restore the rights of the archi-

episcopal see. On the urging of the bishops of London and Salisbury, Henry ordered six clergy of each of the vacant sees to come to him in Normandy, where they proceeded to elect their bishops, as Becket said, "contrary to the canons, and in a foreign land, and in the absence of their brethren". He thoroughly understood the trap set for him. "If I refuse to consecrate those so elected they will have an occasion of sowing discord between me and the king."

Henry had promised that the filched archiepiscopal revenues should be restored. Ranulf and his fellows, however, ignored the royal promise—they doubtless knew that they might do so with impunity—and Thomas determined to make a direct appeal to Prince Henry, who was then at Winchester. Eight days after his arrival in Canterbury he started for London, using the road traversed two hundred years later by Chaucer's pilgrims. At Rochester he was received with fitting dignity by the bishop, who was the brother of Theobald, his predecessor, and at Southwark the streets were again packed with enthusiastic crowds. Thomas was Thomas of London, and in this his last visit to his native city, his fellow-citizens received him with affectionate acclaim. Hundreds of the clergy,

with thousands of boys from the London schools, lined his path, and as he dismounted from his horse, raising his hands to bless the people, they burst out into a great "Te Deum", which they followed with the hymn, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel".

At Southwark he stayed in the palace of Henry of Winchester. Dean Hook suggests that this was an unfortunate lodging, selected as a sign of Becket's hostility to the king. It is true that Henry was the brother of Stephen of Blois, but he had always stood high in the esteem of the Anjou monarch. He was a very old man, and although he was now definitely among the Archbishop's partisans, he had for years striven to make peace between prelate and king. The Dean's suggestion is one more example of the prejudiced historian's eager desire always to make the worst of the saint.

Another disappointment awaited the Archbishop. He had the people's love, but the sovereign's enmity was unalterable. He had sent a present of three handsome chargers to the young prince, but he received an intimation on the morning after his arrival at Southwark that he would not be received. He had, the prince said, broken faith since he had arrived in England, and he was ordered

to return at once to his diocese without entering any other of the king's towns. Fear of the people obviously dictated the command.

The bishops naturally believed that their long years of disaffection would prevent them from receiving a pardon that would imply forgetting as well as forgiving, and consequently they remained among the most active of Becket's enemies. But all the lower clergy, and many of the more distinguished, were definitely on his side. This is a matter of some importance, since it shows that even before his martyrdom, a great part of England was with the Archbishop. While he was at Southwark, for example, the Abbot of St. Albans invited him to his city. The Archbishop replied that he would gladly have spent Christmas in the Abbey of the first English martyr, but the king had ordered him to return to Canterbury and the order must be obeyed.

There further annoyance awaited him. During his short absence Ranulf de Broc, always persistent in ill-doing, had seized a cargo of wine sent to the Archbishop from France. This incident gives good Dean Hook the opportunity to suggest that Thomas had " a relish for wine ", and if he had so

human a quality, it would surely add to rather than take from his saintliness. This time Ranulf had gone a little too far, and he was ordered to restore the stolen goods.

Becket took too long on the journey back to Canterbury to please the king's advisers, and reports were sent to France accusing him of travelling through the country with an army of soldiers. He was, it is true, attended by a mighty concourse, but only of the poor, who came to ask his blessing and who brought their children in hundreds for Confirmation, the Archbishop continually dismounting and administering the Sacrament in fields and on the roads.

Petty persecution continued in the weeks that preceded Christmas. The Archbishop's servants were assaulted, he was continually robbed, and ignoble Ranulf's final achievement was to cut off the tail of one of the Archbishop's horses. Thomas was more righteously enraged by this wanton cruelty than by many a greater insult. The signs were clear for all to read, and his friends urged him again to leave the country. But he refused. He quietly performed the duties of his office, sitting in his court and regularly appearing in the cathedral, and during this time of comparative peace he wrote the last

letter to the Pope, from which I have already quoted.

Thomas sang the midnight Mass in the cathedral on Christmas Eve, and later in the morning preached from the text, " On earth peace and goodwill towards men ". In his sermon, he reminded his hearers that there had already been one martyr among the Archbishops of Canterbury, and that there might well be another. He told them that he believed his time of departure was at hand, and that he should not be with them very long. Weeping was heard all through the church, and murmurs, so Herbert of Bosham tells us, of despair. The poor were to be left desolate without their protector. Herbert says :

> These were no wolves but sheep who knew the voice of their shepherd and grieved when they heard that he would soon leave this world knowing neither when nor wherefore this should come to pass.

After Mass, Becket, like a good Englishman, gave himself up to Christmas festivities, and he " who had shown himself so devout at the Lord's Table showed himself happy as was his wont at the table of this world ". He was happy and he was unafraid. He knew what was awaiting him, and he was only anxious that his fate should not be shared by

his faithful friends. So on December 26, St. Stephen's Day, he sent for Herbert of Bosham and ordered him to go to France and report to the king what was happening in England. Herbert protested. If he went he knew that he would never again see his master in the flesh. He had been a partner in his pain, he asked to be a companion in his glory. But Becket was insistent. "I will that thou depart especially because the king has more enmity against thee than the others for the sake of the Church." And on the evening of the next day, St. John the Evangelist's Day, Herbert set out.

> With this [he wrote] I end my history. I pray with my whole heart with all my soul and all my strength that him, whom I may not see again in time, I may be worthy to see in eternity, and may be his partner in the crown as I was his companion in the battle.

How futile it is to endeavour to belittle the man who could gain such splendid affection from a servant, himself a man of courage and parts. Becket, as this faithful friend knew him, was indeed a great Christian gentleman.

On the day of Herbert's departure, Becket received a letter from France warning him to beware of imminent danger. The king was

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at Bayeux. With him were the excommunicated bishops and messengers from the English civil government, all intent on exciting and increasing the king's anger. Henry demanded what it was that they asked him to do, and one of them—it is easy to guess that it was Roger of York—exclaimed: "My lord, as long as Thomas lives we will not have peace or quiet or see another good day". On hearing this Henry burst into one of his characteristic fits of almost lunatic passion. He protested that he was troubled with all sorts of insistent affairs. Why could not his servants in England themselves deal with this troublesome priest?

> "A fellow," he exclaimed, "that has eaten my bread has lifted up his heel against me—a fellow that I loaded with benefits dares insult the king and the whole royal family, and tramples on the whole kingdom—a fellow that came to court on a lame horse, with a cloak for a saddle, sits without hindrance on the throne itself." "What sluggard wretches," he burst forth again and again, "what cowards have I brought up in my court who care nothing for their allegiance to their master! not one will deliver me from this low-born priest!"

The royal words found greedy listeners. Reginald Fitz-Urse, William de Tracy, Hugh de Morville, and Richard le Bret were four comparatively undistinguished, well-born

ruffians of the type common in mediæval courts, men without scruples, eager to buy royal favour and entirely indifferent as to the manner in which it was bought. They were no better and no worse than scores of other similar men, and it was by a mere accident that they have attained a special infamy through the murder of a saint. After the deed which gave them their place in history among the doers of foul deeds, the chroniclers, with the characteristic humour of the Middle Ages, found indications of their characters in their names. Fitz-Urse was a true son of the bear; Hugh de Morville was Hugh of the City of Death; Richard le Bret would be better named Richard the Brute. Black chapters were discovered in their earlier history, probably true, for men of middle age do not easily take to cold-blooded murder without previous experience.

They had been long about the court; three of them, indeed, had been attached to Becket himself while he was Chancellor. More recently Hugh of the City of Death had been one of the king's circuit judges, and the peasants whose eggs and money and fowls he seized, in accordance with the new laws and customs, doubtless found him well-named. Tracy was the grandson of a natural

son of Henry I., and the royal blood illegitimately in his veins may have excited his hatred of the priest who flaunted a king. Richard le Bret was a kinsman of Gilbert of London, which, to some extent, accounts for his murdering zeal.

The king spoke and they consulted together. To kill Thomas would mean to please the king, and the deed was surely defensible since it was a bishop who had declared that there could be no peace while Thomas lived. They seem to have consulted Roger of York, the most unscrupulous and the boldest of Thomas's enemies, and to have told him what was in their minds. He encouraged the project, supplied them with money for their journey, and bade them set off to Canterbury by different roads that Thomas might not have warning of their coming. Henry heard of their departure, and, suspecting their plans, endeavoured to prevent them from crossing the Channel, but his messengers were too late. He had spoken in wild anger. But, as always happened with him, the hot mood was followed by cold calculation. He was far wiser than his advisers, and he knew that after a martyr's death, Becket would be far more formidable than he could be during his life.

Two of the knights landed near Dover and two at Winchelsea, and the four arrived together at Saltwood Castle, one of the archiepiscopal residences that had been stolen by Ranulf de Broc, who naturally gave them the warmest of welcomes. The five men sat in furtive council through the dark winter's night, behind locked doors and with the candles extinguished, and in the morning they rode to Canterbury with Robert de Broc, Ranulf's nephew, and a troop of soldiers which he had provided. At Canterbury they went to the Abbey of St. Augustine, the Abbot of which was a partisan of the king, and whose ten years' enmity to Becket had proved extremely remunerative. But their arrival in the city soon became known. They sent word to the Provost that the citizens were to do nothing to hinder the king's will, and a great crowd assembled before the cathedral, fearful for the Archbishop and fearful for themselves.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when the knights, still with Robert de Broc, rode into the courtyard of the Archbishop's palace. The 29th December 1170 was a Tuesday, and Dean Stanley has pointed out that Tuesday was the great day in Becket's life. He was born on a Tuesday and baptized on a

Tuesday. He had fled from Northampton on a Tuesday. He had left England on a Tuesday, and returned to its shores on a Tuesday. Now he was to die on a Tuesday. The knights dismounted in the courtyard. The doors of the palace were all open. There was no one to stay their way; no hindrance to their entrance. The crime that they intended must have seemed too easy, and, reckless swashbucklers though they were, they seem to have become a little shamefaced. Hugh of the City of Death, a little less hungry for murder than his fellows, may have whispered that the Archbishop should be given one last chance to submit to the king's will. Anyway, they left their weapons in the courtyard and pulled their cloaks over their coats of mail, and with one attendant soldier went into the Archbishop's hall. As I have said, dinner was over and the servants were making their meal. The knights were cordially invited to join them, but they declined, and striding through the hall, made their way to the staircase that led to Becket's room. In the incidents of St. Thomas's martyrdom there is a constant and curious resemblance between the tragedy of Canterbury and the Passion of Our Lord. In his last moments Becket's friends and disciples were to leave

him, in desperate care for their own safety, to die almost alone. And he too had his Judas, one William FitzNigel, his seneschal, who was leaving his master on this very day to go to the king in France and who met the knights at the foot of the private staircase. It was he who announced their coming to the Archbishop.

"Let them come in," said Becket. He was sitting on a couch with a little group of his household on the floor around him. The faithful John of Salisbury was there, and one Edward Grim, a Saxon monk recently come from Cambridge. Becket took no notice of the knights when they came into the room. He did not salute them nor they him, and ignoring their presence he went on gossiping to his friends. His coolness must have been extremely embarrassing. It must appear little less than insulting to a murderer to find his intended victim unconcerned. For a few minutes the four knights stood in a little awkward group by the door, and one can imagine that Hugh of the City of Death wished himself back at Bayeux, and that it must have occurred to young Robert de Broc, inexperienced in assassination, furtively to steal back to his uncle at Saltwood. The truculent Fitz-Urse was the first to recover

from his embarrassment, and he led his companions to the place where the Archbishop was sitting. They sat themselves on the floor at his feet. For some moments the Archbishop looked at them in silence, and then gravely saluted each one of them, but, records Grim, " the wretches who made a treaty with death answered his greetings with curses and ironically prayed that God might help him ". Becket flushed and restrained himself with difficulty. He could never suffer insults gladly. Then Fitz-Urse exclaimed : " We have somewhat to say to thee by the king's command. Say if thou wilt that we tell it here before all." After a protest—" These things should not be spoken in private or in the chamber but in public "—the Archbishop motioned to the monks to leave the room, but they left the door ajar so that if necessary they could rush back for his defence. Alone with the Archbishop it seemed to the knights that they had an excellent opportunity for the deed that they had planned. It was true that their weapons were below in the courtyard, but they could easily kill the Primate with the shaft of the cross which was by his side. They must have made some threatening motion, for the monks hurried back into the room and

remained there during the rest of the interview. Fitz-Urse was again the spokesman :

" The king," he said, " when peace was made between you and all disputes were ended, sent you back free to your own see, as you demanded : but you on the other hand, adding insult to your former injuries, have broken the peace and wrought evil in yourself against your lord. For those by whose ministry the king's son was crowned and invested with the honours of sovereignty, you, with obstinate pride, have condemned by sentence of suspension, and you have also bound with the chain of anathema those servants of the king by whose prudent counsels the business of the kingdom is transacted : from which it is manifest that you would take away the crown from the king's son if you were able. Now your plots and schemes you have laid to carry out your designs against the king are known to all. Say, therefore, are you ready to answer in the king's presence for these things : for therefore are we sent."

Becket's answer was calm and pacific. The charge that he desired to take the crown from the king's son was preposterous. " Rather would I wish him three crowns and would aid him to obtain the greatest realms of the earth with right and equity." It was natural that his people, who had not seen him for seven years, should come to him now for consolation. As for the suspensions they were the work of the Pope. The Archbishop's calm dignity added to the

rage of the assassins. John of Salisbury whispered to him that he should be prudent, but Becket waved him aside. They had made charges against him, he had his own grievance. His servants had been robbed, his possessions had been stolen, his horses had been maimed. Hugh of the City of Death saw a chance of mediation. Doubtless there were many things of which the Archbishop had the right to complain. Why did he not appeal to the king instead of taking on himself to punish? But Becket sternly replied: "When the rights of the Church are violated I shall wait for no man's permission to avenge them. I will give to the king the things that are the king's, but to God the things that are God's."

There was a shout of protest from the knights, and more of the Archbishop's servants and clergy, with soldiers of the household, rushed into the room and stood by his side. Thomas, now white with excitement and anger, sprang to his feet and faced his enemies. "This", said Fitz-Urse, "is the king's demand that you depart with all your men from the kingdom and the land which lies under his sway." "Never", replied the Archbishop, "shall the sea again come between me and my Church unless I

am dragged thence by the feet. You threaten me in vain ; were all the swords in England hanging over my head you could not terrify me from my obedience to God and my lord the Pope. Foot to foot shall you find me in the battle of the Lord. Whoso shall presume to violate the decrees of the sacred Roman See or the laws of Christ's Church and shall refuse to make satisfaction, whosoever he be, I will not spare him nor will I delay to inflict ecclesiastical censures on the delinquents." Threat was thus answered with threat. Almost alone though he was, certain as was his fate, Becket had lost not one whit of his courage.

Fitz-Urse ordered the servants to stand away from the Archbishop. They disregarded the order, and then he bade them to prevent their master from escaping, and Thomas replied, " Here I shall remain ". Catching hold of William Fitz-Nigel, the false seneschal, the knights hurried from the room. The seneschal, anxious to hide his treachery, turned to his master and exclaimed, " You see what they are doing to me ", and Becket replied, " This is their hour and the power of darkness ". At the door Fitz-Urse turned and, anxious to find some plea of excuse, shouted to Thomas, " Remember

it is you who have threatened us". Hugh of the City of Death lingered behind. He warned the Archbishop that he had spoken at the peril of his life, and Becket looking at him reproachfully asked, "Is it too late for you to save your soul?" "It is too late", said Hugh, one may hope with some regret, and he joined his companions, who were rushing from the hall and shouting, "To arms".

The gate of the palace was closed to prevent the citizens of Canterbury from coming to the help of their Archbishop, and Thomas's Judas, William Fitz-Nigel, mounted guard before the gate with a soldier attached to the household of the Abbey of St. Augustine. The knights threw off their cloaks and girded on their swords, Fitz-Urse being aided by a lesser Judas, a scullion from the Archbishop's kitchen. The rest of Thomas's people remained faithful, and while the knights were in the courtyard, the doors of the great hall were barred, but here Robert de Broc played his own mean little part in the tragedy. He had lived with his uncle in the palace during the Archbishop's exile, and he led the knights into an orchard from which a staircase led to the Archbishop's apartment. The carpenters had been working on the staircase and had left their axes behind, and these the

murderers seized. They broke into the hall through a window, wounded the servants, and forced their way again to Thomas's private rooms.

Becket's anger had left him with the knights and their noisy threats, and was succeeded by a great calm. John of Salisbury, kind, easy man, was not eager for martyrdom. He protested that Thomas would never take advice, that he was always headstrong, that he had fanned his enemies' rage. "I am prepared to die", said Becket. "But we sinners", was the reply, "are not yet prepared for death." And to this Becket answered, "God's will be done". The crashing of the doors announced the return of the murderers, and, so Grim relates: "At this terrible noise were the servants and clerks horribly affrighted and like sheep before the wolf dispersed hither and thither". Only four or five remained with their master. "I wonder", Becket is reported to have said, "why monks should all be cowards."

He was urged to take refuge in the church, but he replied that he had promised to remain where he was. Then he was reminded that it was five o'clock, the hour of Vespers, and that it was his business to attend the service, and at last he was persuaded. But, recalling

the council of Northampton, he would not move without his crosier, and, with the cross borne in front of him, the little procession made its way along generally unused passages to the cathedral. It is easy to imagine the scene—the crucifer with shaky hands, the little group of attendants round the Archbishop, white-faced and begging him to hurry, Becket alone calm and dignified. His calmness at last became unbearable, and at the end the terrified attendants hustled him along to what they hoped might prove to be sanctuary. Grim records: "The monks got hold of him in spite of his resistance, and pulled, dragged and pushed him, not heeding his clamours to be let go, and brought him to the church". Vespers had already begun, but at the Archbishop's entrance the monks stopped their singing and clustered round him, "glorifying God that they saw their father, whom they had heard was dead, alive and safe". They wanted to close the cathedral doors, but they were forbidden. "It is not meet", said Thomas, "to make a fortress of the house of prayer. Though it be not shut up it is able to protect its own, and we shall triumph rather in suffering than in fighting." And the Archbishop ordered the service to proceed.

A crowd of townsmen gathered at the cathedral doors, crying that the knights were coming, and soon the clash of armour was heard in the south aisle. The four bad men came to their foul deed reinforced from local rascaldom, among whom was the chaplain of Robert de Broc, "a certain subdeacon armed with malice like their own, Hugh fitly surnamed for his wickedness 'Mauclerc', who showed no reverence for God nor his saint". The monks fled in every direction, and even John of Salisbury rushed away with the rest. Some knelt at the altars, others hid in the darkness of the crypt, and in the chambers in the roof of the cathedral. It would have been easy even now for Becket to have saved himself by flight, but he broke away from those who would have dragged him into safety, and with Robert of Merton, William Fitz-Stephen, his chaplain, and Edward Grim, the Saxon monk from Cambridge, awaited the murderers. "Where is Thomas Becket the traitor?" "I am here—no traitor, but a priest."

Thomas stood in the Lady Chapel, near the altar of St. Benedict. Around him were the tombs of six archbishops. He was wearing a white rochet with the cloak and hood. The knights surrounded him. "Absolve and

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restore to communion those whom you have excommunicated," they demanded, "and restore their powers to those whom you have suspended!" He answered as before, "There has been no satisfaction and I will not absolve." "Then you shall die," Fitz-Urse cried, "I will tear out your heart." "Reginald," was the calm reply, "you have received many favours at my hands, why do you come into my church armed?" "Fly while there is time," whispered Hugh of the City of Death, "or you are a dead man." "I am ready," said Thomas, "to die for my Lord that in my blood the Church may obtain liberty and peace." "But," he added solemnly, "in the name of Almighty God I forbid you to hurt my people, whether clerk or lay." "Thus piously and thoughtfully," comments Grim, "did the noble martyr provide that no one near him should be hurt or the innocent should be brought to death whereby his glory should be dimmed as he hastened to Christ."

There followed a scene horrible in its brutality. The Bear and the Brute and the illegitimate descendant of Norman kings had no scruples against the killing of a prince of the Church, but they had some superstitious fear of killing him on sacred ground. So,

with the traitor clerk, well called Mauclerc, they caught hold of the Archbishop, intending to drag him out of the cathedral and kill him in the cloisters. Becket resisted. By this time only Edward Grim, the monk from Cambridge, stood by his side, the Saxon willing to die with the first English Archbishop of Canterbury since the Conquest. He remonstrated, struggled with the assailants, threw his arms round his patron.

Becket was a strong man. He picked up Tracy, the illegitimate descendant of kings, and flung him down upon the pavement, and soon it was evident to the Bear that they must kill the Archbishop where he stood, and that, whatever might be the consequences, he must die before the altar of Our Lady. So swords were drawn, and shouting, "Strike, strike", the Bear and the Brute and the illegitimate descendant of kings struck at the Archbishop. He folded his hands, shut his eyes, and quietly said, "I commend my cause and the cause of the Church to God, to St. Denis, the martyr of France, to St. Alfege and to all the saints!"

Grim's arm was broken in the attack, and wounded and in sore pain he threw himself on the steps of the altar of St. Benedict. Becket was now alone. His head was broken,

his shoulder was badly cut, his face was covered with blood. "Into thy hands, O Lord", he murmured, "I commend my spirit." Another blow and he sank on his knees, his hands still joined in prayer, and with his face turned towards the altar of St. Benedict, he whispered his last words: "For the name of Jesus and for the defence of the Church I am willing to die". Then he fell flat on his face, his long mantle covering his body from head to foot. But the assassins were not satisfied. Richard the Brute, a close friend of Prince William, the brother of the king, whom Becket had prevented from making an uncanonical marriage, shouting, "Take this for love of my lord William", dealt the dead body so violent a blow that his sword snapped in two on the pavement. And the meanest of them all, the false clerk, Hugh Mauclerc, not to be outdone in wickedness, thrust his sword into the broken head and scattered the brains on the pavement.

Hugh of the City of Death had struck no blow. Ashamed of his part in the foul business he had been content to remain at the west end of the cathedral, stopping the cowed crowds from preventing the murder of the saint.

Becket was dead! For a few moments his assassins stood silent and in dread. It is a fearsome thing to kill the righteous, because they are certain to rise again. Then the Bear, still the boldest of the sorry crew, repeated the catchword, "The king's men, the king's men", and led his companions back through the cloisters to the palace, wounding a servant or two in their onrush. Theft followed murder. Guided by young Robert de Broc, anxious to prove himself a worthy scion of a rascally house, the palace was plundered from kitchen to turret. Gold and silver vases, vestments, pictures, furniture, property, worth some two thousand marks, were piled up on waggons and driven away under the escort of soldiers through the silent streets. One thing only they left behind. In Becket's room they found two hair shirts, and these they cast aside.

In the dark aisles of the silent cathedral, monk after monk came out of his hiding-place bitterly ashamed, and vainly trying to find excuse for cowardice and desertion. "If the Archbishop had not been so obstinate he need not have died", said one. "He wished to be king and more than king. Let him be king, let him be king", said another. But for all the protests they felt very mean

and very little as they dusted the dirt from their habits and stole to the place where the martyr lay. Almost stealthily the doors of the cathedral were shut, and then by a light held by his chamberlain they turned the dead Archbishop's body over. "And all men were amazed at the calm beauty of his countenance." The top of his head was bathed in blood, but there was only one small wound on his cheek. His eyes were closed as if he were asleep, and there was a smile on his lips. They picked up the axe which the Bear had used to so foul a purpose, the broken halves of le Bret's sword, and the dead saint's cap. The brains scattered over the pavement were collected into a vessel, and as the hours of the night passed, the monks, recently so eager to find excuses for the killing, were kneeling in veneration and dipping their cloaks in the martyr's blood. The head was tied up with clean linen, the body was placed on a bier and carried to the high altar, and standing in front of the corpse Robert of Merton recited his great deeds and told the story of the austerity of his life. Bending down, he undid the Archbishop's garments and showed the hair shirt beneath. For the first time the monks knew something of the realities of Thomas of London, and they fell

on their knees and kissed his hands, and gave him the name of St. Thomas.

The hair shirt which Becket wore was of unusual roughness and covered the whole body down to the knees, and, as an additional and more unusual discipline, he wore a pair of close-fitting hair drawers. These terrible garments were covered with white linen, so that no one should know of the daily agony to which the Archbishop submitted himself. He, indeed, carefully concealed the thoroughness with which he disciplined the flesh. Whether or no it is possible for the twentieth-century man to understand the voluntary submission to perpetual bodily discomfort, it is an additional evidence of Becket's greatness of soul that he should have taken pains not to gain reputation from a rigour which he considered necessary for the good of his soul, and to enable him to perform with due devotion the duties of his life. The Canterbury monks were indeed astounded when they stripped his body to discover " what a true monk " he was.

The hair shirt and drawers, continually worn, had an inevitable consequence. They abounded with vermin, " boiling over with them like water in a simmering cauldron ". It would be idle to deny that the description

is revolting, and seems to suggest so wide a gulf between the twelfth and the twentieth century as to make understanding impossible. It is just such little details as this that are always fastened on and exaggerated by the writers who proclaim that the Middle Ages were barbarous and beastly, and it would be obviously cowardly to ignore them. Good men and bad men, princes and peasants, saints and sinners, were much dirtier eight hundred years ago than they are to-day, although it would be as well to remember that a considerable part of the population in England in 1926 is certainly not over-washed. There is much to be said for the contention that cleanliness is next to godliness, but, as Fr. Benson said to a Cowley novice who had provided himself with a large hip bath, "Let us be godly first". To sneer at St. Francis because he was dirty and verminous when he died on the floor of his cell outside Assisi, as Dr. Barnes sneers, or to shudder at St. Thomas because he too was verminous, as Dean Stanley shudders, is to read history in the spirit of an elderly Victorian spinster in a lavender-scented drawing-room. Probably most people were more or less verminous in the time of Becket. But Becket was deliberately verminous. He wore a hair

shirt and permitted his body to be constantly bitten as part of the discipline of his life, just as St. Francis, who had been brought up in a well-run household, forced himself to eat food the very sight of which made him sick. The modern man does not understand such things. The modern man, indeed, does not understand discipline at all. And the modern man is not, as a rule, ready to die for a great ideal as St. Thomas died, or to love his fellow-man as St. Francis loved him. It is not for me to defend, but it is for us all to try and understand. The method adopted by the saint for making his body subject to his soul may be denounced as revolting, but it was at least effective. There was a thoroughness about the mediæval mind. Becket knew the certain consequences when he put off the habit of the Chancellor to put on the habit of the Archbishop. He knew exactly the character of the task that he had to fulfil. In his early days in the palace at Canterbury he concluded, knowing himself so well, that it was only by persistently keeping the body under, that he could attain the strength and serenity necessary to fight the king and to maintain the rights of the Church. It is easy to say that the flagellations, the hair shirt and the fleas could have

no sort of connection with the persistence of the years of exile and with the courage of the death in the cathedral. Thomas believed they had, and perhaps he knew better than his modern critics, who regard abstention from meat on Friday as the limit of defensible bodily sacrifice.

In the enthusiasm caused by the discovery of the Archbishop's austere life, the monks threw open the doors of Canterbury Cathedral, and the citizens followed the clergy in veneration, and it is said (and who am I to doubt it ?) that many cures were then and there effected through the efficacy of St. Thomas's blood.

The murderers made their way back to Saltwood, with their booty, through a great storm. Thunder and lightning brought fear to the hearts of the citizens of Canterbury, but not so much to them as to the killers of the saint, and most of all to Hugh of the City of Death, who had faltered but had not grace enough to fail.

Early the next day a messenger came to the cathedral from Ranulf de Broc forbidding the monks to bury the body among the tombs of the archbishops, and fearing further outrage, the doors of the cathedral were once more shut and the body was buried secretly

and in silence in the crypt. No Requiem could be said, for the cathedral had been desecrated by the murder. All the hangings were taken down from the walls, the images and crucifixes were veiled, and the altar stripped, and for one year no prayer was uttered in the cathedral church of St. Augustine.

Many are the legends told of the later years of St. Thomas's murderers, but little actually is known of them. For their crime they could only be tried in the Church courts, and the severest sentence to which they could condemn was excommunication. It was his enemies who benefited from Thomas's fight for ecclesiastical jurisdiction. It is said that the knights made pilgrimage to the Holy Land and that three of them were killed in wars against the Saracens, while on the journey home, William de Tracy was wrecked on the southern coast of Italy, where he met a miserable death. Before his departure, as some sort of expiation, he had willed certain of his possessions to the Chapter of Canterbury for the support of a monk to celebrate masses for the souls of the living and the dead.

CHAPTER VIII

THOMAS THE SAINT

EUROPE shuddered at the news of the murder of Thomas of Canterbury, which was widely denounced as the vilest crime the world had known since the Crucifixion of Our Lord. The stories of the miracles of Canterbury were everywhere believed, and, indeed, are far too well substantiated by contemporary evidence to make scepticism possible, except for the professional sceptic. Protestant writers have been much troubled by these miracles, but I am fortunate in not being forced by prejudice into the hopeless position of Dean Hook and Dean Stanley. Belief that the miracles were genuine is confirmed by the fact noted by Dr. Abbott, himself a considerable sceptic, that it was the poor folk of Canterbury who " persisted so to speak in being cured at a time when such cure was unfashionable or even dangerous ".

Within a few months of St. Thomas's

death, pilgrims flocked from every part of Western Europe to Canterbury as people flock nowadays to Lourdes, some to pray, and others to be healed. As the journeyings were particularly hazardous, it is obvious that many of the sick must have been cured or the procession would not have continued. Superior persons smile at the credulity of the men of the olden days. But we are every bit as credulous, although as a demonstration of our progress we reject the superstition of our fathers and invent grosser ones for ourselves. Men who declare that the doctrine of the Incarnation is preposterous, fondly believe that their dead friends communicate with them by making a table cavort about a carpet. We no longer trust the priest, but we accept without hesitation the most preposterous assertions made by men of science. As Mr. Bernard Shaw writes in his preface to *Saint Joan*:

> To-day when the doctor has succeeded to the priest, and can do practically what he likes with parliament and the press through the blind faith in him which has succeeded to the far more critical faith in the parson, legal compulsion to take the doctor's prescription, however poisonous, is carried to an extent that would have horrified the Inquisition and staggered Archbishop Laud. Our credulity is grosser than that of the Middle Ages, because the

priest had no such direct pecuniary interest in our sins as the doctor has in our diseases: he did not starve when all was well with his flock, nor prosper when they were perishing, as our private commercial doctors must. Also the mediæval cleric believed that something extremely unpleasant would happen to him after death if he was unscrupulous, a belief now practically extinct among persons receiving a dogmatically materialist education.

If Europe was appalled by the murder, Henry of Anjou was terrified. The king of France at once declared a holy alliance against him, the Pope threatened him with excommunication, and in fear of what was to happen, in the autumn of 1171 Henry hurried over to Ireland to recover by a new conquest some of the prestige that he had lost. From Ireland he went to Wales, from Wales to England, from England again to France. "He may rather be said to fly than go by horse and boat", said Louis of France. It was the spirit of the murdered Becket that pursued him; he was trying to escape from the Hound of Heaven. Finally he realised that full and public penitence must be made for the murder of Becket or he would lose his kingdoms. Even the men who had urged him to take strong measures against a mere rebellious clerk grew fearful after the king's creatures had murdered a saint. In

May 1172 Henry met a papal delegation at Avranches. He solemnly swore that he had not ordered the Archbishop's murder, and that when he had heard of it "he rather grieved than rejoiced". Both of which statements were true. None the less he admitted that he was indirectly responsible for the crime, and the legates ordered that as a penance he should provide two hundred knights at his own expense and maintain them for a year in the war against the Saracens in the Holy Land, that he should renounce the Constitutions of Clarendon, that he should restore to the Church at Canterbury all the goods and possessions that he had seized, and that if the Pope required it, he should fight in Spain to free that country from the Moslems. To all these demands the king agreed, though some of them were never carried out.

Two years more passed, years of political misfortune for the king, years which brought an ever increasing conviction that he could not escape by smooth promises from the crime that he had inspired, and, at last, in the summer of 1174, coming back from France to Southampton, he made his journey to Canterbury as a simple pilgrim, living on bread and water, and walking barefoot into

the city. He passed through an amazed and silent crowd to the cathedral porch, and then straight to the scene of the murder. Here he knelt and kissed the place on which the Archbishop had fallen. Then he was taken to the crypt and kissed the tomb. Gilbert of London, Thomas's old enemy, stood by his side and announced the king's penitence to the people, and his desire to make full restitution by restoring all the rights and properties of the Church. The king threw back the rough cloak from his shoulders, underneath which he was wearing a hair-cloth shirt, placed his head and shoulders on the tomb, and received five strokes from each of the bishops and three strokes from each of the eighty monks who were present. Then he was left alone, remaining all through the night, fasting and in prayer. In the morning he heard Mass and rode back to London. "So deep a humiliation", says Dean Stanley, "of so great a prince was unparalleled within the memory of that generation". The story was told from one end of Christendom to the other. It was the crowning episode of the life of St. Thomas of Canterbury, and the dramatic emphasis of its significance, and the significance became the greater when four days after his return to London word

was brought to the king that his enemy the King of Scotland was taken prisoner. Penitence had brought its reward. On hearing the good news, Henry jumped from his bed, and returned thanks to God and St. Thomas.

"Becket", says Dr. Hutton, "was no plaster saint." He was not. He was a human saint. Dean Stanley bids us remember "the violence, the obstinacy, the furious words and acts which deformed even the dignity of his last hour and wellnigh turned the solemnity of his martyrdom into an unseemly brawl". Could anything be more ridiculous? The unseemly brawl was caused by the fact that St. Thomas would not allow himself to be dragged out of the church to be killed in the cloisters. He was a man not given to compromise, not inclined to turn the other cheek, of magnificent courage, and, if you will, conspicuous obstinacy. But the whole meaning of his life and death is lost if it is not realised that he was compelled by faith and direct conviction to fight for a principle which he regarded as fundamental, against the most powerful, the most determined, and the most talented of English mediæval kings. Compromise was as impossible for Henry II. as for St.

Thomas. Becket either had to fight him or submit to him. He fought him ; he died in the fight ; and he gained victory through his death. Good men have often died for bad causes, bad men have often died for good causes. Martyrdom alone cannot ensure the martyr's crown. Even Dr. Hutton appears to have a doubt as to the righteousness of the cause for which he gave his life. Dean Hook and Dean Stanley, as is natural with nineteenth-century English Churchmen, are quite certain that he was wrong. I am equally certain that he was right. It was absolutely necessary in the circumstances of the world of the twelfth century for the Church to preserve its international unity and its independence of the secular power. What I have called the Hildebrandian principles may have been stated in unnecessarily uncompromising terms, but they summarised a doctrine essential if the Church were to carry on its mission.

To me the great outstanding fact of the life of Becket is that he was loved by the poor. The Sandwich fishermen rushed into the water to drag his boat ashore. The London craftsmen thronged the streets to ask his blessing. The villagers of Kent acclaimed his coming as the coming of the Lord. In

the twelfth century the poor man thought of the Church as the natural source of help, succour and protection, and, not being a fool, for understanding did not come into the world with the gramophone, he realised that all chance of protection and succour would be destroyed if the Church lost its independence, and its Primate became the mere creature of the king. The mediæval Church may have been all that its critics say that it was. Every wild statement made by Froude, every charge stated with far greater moderation by historians like Professor Coulton, may be absolutely justified, and yet the indisputable fact remains that the great mass of the people venerated the Church, which we are told was a mass of corruption, and loved and respected its chief ministers, who, we are told, were venal, idle and self-seeking. I do not believe that the character of the English has essentially changed in eight hundred years. I am quite sure that Kentish fishermen nowadays would not dash into the sea to pull ashore with shouts of welcome and joy any man, be he prince or primate, for whom they had not well-justified admiration and affection. Mr. Bernard Shaw accuses the English of being a romantic people, but I submit that they have never been sufficiently romantic to

give something for nothing, to offer abundant affection unless that affection had been inspired by obvious service.

It would be difficult to find a parallel in English history for the unqualified admiration in which St. Thomas was held by the bulk of his fellow-countrymen. Who among the politicians, the reformers and the Labour leaders of modern times has ever ridden as St. Thomas rode along miles of the roads of Kent, through lines of kneeling men and women and children calling down blessings on his head and asking his blessing in return. I do not forget the crowds of the humble that waited in tears for Laud outside his palace at Lambeth when he too was going to his death, and I suggest in both cases, and in the case of St. Thomas to a far greater extent, that the popular emotion was the result, not of a mere passing sentimentality, but of the conviction based on the experience of generations that the poor could always look to the Church for protection, and could look nowhere else. If this be so, the death of St. Thomas and the principles for which he died, have a significance very different from that which is generally suggested. One biographer, apparently regarding St. Thomas as a fool, tells us that he gave his life to establish the precedence

of Canterbury over York. Another, stating a half truth without troubling to examine its full import, will have it that St. Thomas died that the Pope might be held in greater esteem than the king. The truth is that St. Thomas died for the poor, and it is an unquestionable fact that the poor knew that he died for them. It was four years before St. Thomas was formally canonised by Rome, but he was acclaimed a saint by the needy folk of Canterbury within a few hours of his death.

I began this book designedly with the sentence: "St. Thomas of Canterbury was martyred in 1170; St. Francis of Assisi was born in 1182". Dr. Barnes has called St. Francis a Communist, and though the description is an exaggeration, it is certain that the precepts and the practice of the early Franciscans were not regarded with much favour by the rich landlords and the grasping profiteers of their time. The mission of the Franciscans would have been impossible, and their own devotion would not have availed unless they had been backed by the authority of the Church. There is no episode in the whole history of the Papacy more glorious than the promptness with which Innocent III. discovered that for all his eccentricities

—and they must have been very troublesome —St. Francis was a saint, and that if he was a fool, he was God's fool. Unless the independent authority of the Church had been fairly established in the twelfth century, the mission of St. Francis in the thirteenth century would almost certainly have been frustrated by the apprehension of princes and barons, and the fear of the well-to-do, of what might happen if the Gospel in its full significance were preached to the poor and the dispossessed. And it was by the martyrdom of St. Thomas more than by anything else that the Church established the independence and the authority that had such far-reaching consequences. Froude admits that the death of St. Thomas was directly responsible for the clause in Magna Charta ensuring the liberties of the Church, and that it was his martyrdom that postponed for three hundred years the carrying out of the purpose of Henry II. As Froude pleasantly puts it, all through those three centuries " the English laity were condemned to writhe under the yoke which their own credulous folly had imposed on them ". But, alas, the English laity, particularly when they were undistinguished, found the yoke easy and the burden light, and, poor fools, when

they were forcibly removed by Henry VIII. and his successors, the English laity rose in revolt, and the Tudors had to bring hired soldiers from Germany to compel the acceptance of a rule in which the power of the king was unlimited, and the power of the Church to defend at last largely destroyed.

Almost all assertions can be proved, just as nearly all assertions can be disproved. The historian who says that St. Thomas died in the endeavour to protect the criminous clerks from proper punishment by law courts, has no difficulty in finding plausible evidence of the truth of the contention. The nationalist who tells us that St. Thomas died in order that the English Church should be held in the thraldom of a foreign ecclesiastic, will have no greater difficulty in producing reasons for the faith that is in him. But both assertions are so partially true that they are essentially untrue. The masterful monarch of the type of Henry II., endeavouring to carve for himself an empire out of Europe, was continually troubled by the interference of an international body to which not only all his subjects, whatever language they might speak, but also the subjects of his rivals, owed a common allegiance. In order, therefore, to

succeed in his ambition, he was compelled, generally with some misgiving, to endeavour to curtail the authority and influence of this mystic institution, to rob it, so far as he could, of its international character, and while not denying the essential catholicity of the Church, to deprive that catholicity of its logical consequence by insisting on an individual nationalism of the Church in each country. The idea of a national church did not begin with a nation. It began with a king. Thanks again to the martyrdom, nationalism in England did not develop until the Reformation. Indeed, Henry II. himself did not so much want an English Church in England as Henry II.'s Church in England. Becket died for the preservation of God's Church in England—God's Church as comprehensive as God's earth, as united as the Godhead Itself, and finding the necessary and legitimate expression of its unity in fealty to God's Vicar on earth.

It was not a mere abstraction for which St. Thomas died. The Church was to him something far more than a hierarchy, something far more than a society of cardinals and bishops, of priests and monks. They were officers of the army of the Lord whose privileges must be conserved unless the army

was to lose its chance of victory. And the mission of the army as he saw it—at least so the incidents of his life speak to me—was primarily the salvation and the protection of the weak and of the poor.

The nationalism that has sapped the material and spiritual strength of Europe since the Reformation, and has deprived the Church of a large part of its power for good, was necessarily opposed at its inception by the Church. It is often contended by writers, Anglo-Catholics among them, that before the Reformation the English Church was an independent national church, but Maitland is entirely justified when he declares: "Whereas the English State was an independent whole, the English Church was in the eyes of its own judges a dependent fragment whose laws had been imposed on it from without". The last words do not put the case quite fairly, for "in the eyes of its own judges" the laws of the Church were not imposed but divinely inspired. But Becket's insistence that the Church in England should be nothing else but—to use Maitland's term—a fragment of a greater whole, made the struggle between him and Henry a struggle between nationalism and internationalism. The struggle went on for

centuries, and in the end nationalism won with a grievous result that this generation, more than any other that preceded it, has sad reason to appreciate.

In 1173 Thomas was formally canonised by Pope Alexander III., whom he had served so faithfully. Canterbury Cathedral had been reconsecrated on December 21, 1171, the feast of St. Thomas the Apostle, by Bartholomew, Bishop of Exeter, who, after Mass, preached from the text, "For the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart Thy comforts have refreshed my soul". The government, apparently spurred on by Roger of York, who remains to the end the villain of the drama of Becket's life, had endeavoured to suppress the miracles at St. Thomas's tomb, but that was impossible since their fame had spread all through Europe. The pilgrimages to Canterbury had begun immediately after his death, princes and even kings journeying with lesser folk. But naturally it was the English who were most eager to pay homage to the English martyr, and it was these very English pilgrimages, made by cheerful and even sometimes roystering English men and women, that inspired the father of English poetry. As Chaucer says in his Prologue :

And specially, from every shires ende
Of Engelond to Caunturbury they wende
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.

England honoured the English saint in the typically good-humoured English way.

In 1172 Alexander sent a legation to England to investigate the miracles. The legates found them authentic—of course, the critics suggest they were either fools or knaves—and St. Thomas was canonised on February 21 the following year, his feast day being fixed for December 29, the date of the martyrdom. In his letter to the Chapter at Canterbury the Pope said :

We command you and the whole English Church by Apostolical authority, to solemnise his feast yearly on the day on which he finished his life by glorious martyrdom. Since, therefore, it is right and expedient to yourselves that his holy body should be buried with the reverence and honour that is his due, we command you to make solemn procession on some fitting day, when the clergy and people are met together, and place his body, with all reverence, on an altar, or elevate it in a chest suitable for the purpose, and pray that his pious intercessions for the whole body of the faithful, and the peace of the universal church, may be offered up unto the Lord.

The removal of the body, however, as ordered by Alexander, did not occur for some

years. In the autumn of 1174, a great part of the cathedral was destroyed by fire, and the rebuilding was not finished until 1220. By that time the learned Honorius III., the successor of Innocent III. who had recognised the sanctity of St. Francis, sat on the papal throne. Henry III., grandson of Henry II., was King of England, and Stephen Langton, the prelate patriot, who had compelled King John to sign the Magna Charta, and who held St. Thomas in special veneration, was Archbishop of Canterbury. On June 27 of that year, after a three days' fast, the Archbishop, with the Cathedral Chapter, opened the tomb in the crypt, and taking out the bones of St. Thomas, laid them reverently in a chest that had been made "in a fair fashion with a trusty lock to it". A few of the bones were kept, the Archbishop desiring "to divide them amongst certain glorious Cathedral churches, or to make a loving present of them unto certain excellent persons". On July 7 the city of Canterbury was crowded with folk from all over the country for the ceremony of the translation. So many people were there that many of them had to sleep in tents or "under the open sky". Solemnly and with due ceremony the chest with the trusty lock was borne from

the crypt to the high altar in the presence of the king, with the great barons of the realm, the papal legate, the Archbishop of Rheims, and all the English bishops and abbots.

> It is a matter not soon told [says a contemporary writer], what sort of thanksgiving was performed that summer day for the honour of the blessed Thomas for that very ceremony grew so long for the sake of the offerings and the devotion of the people that it seemed as if it were never coming to an end at all.

For the making of the shrine "the greatest master of the craft" was engaged by the Archbishop, and for three hundred years the pilgrims prayed before it and laid their offerings on it. It became more and more magnificent in its decoration. Among the precious stones with which it was garnished was a great ruby given by Louis VII. of France. Erasmus visited the shrine shortly before the desecration, and in one of his colloquies makes a traveller argue that Thomas, who cared so much for the poor, would have infinitely preferred that the money spent on making his shrine gorgeous should have been used in ministering to the necessities of the needy.

The destruction of the shrine was ordered by Henry VIII. in August 1538. The gold and precious stones were stolen by the orders

of Cromwell, the iron chest was broken open and the bones burnt, and Becket was once more denounced as a " rebel and traitor to his prince ". Not again for centuries were pilgrimages made to the place of St. Thomas's martyrdom, but those pilgrimages had played too large a part in the life of England not to have left their trace behind. In 1179 a house for the care of the sick was built on the south side of the river opposite Westminster in honour of God and the blessed martyr Thomas of London. Later on the hospital passed into the hands of the Augustinian canons, and after the dissolution the citizens of London built St. Thomas's Hospital on its site.

There are memorials of the saint outside his own country, sacred relics in the great Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, and a mosaic so far away as the Byzantine church of Monreale built on the hill above Palermo in Sicily. But it is by Thames side that Thomas of London is best remembered, in the great house where the poor, whom he loved, are tended with the courage and devotion which were the outstanding qualities of his own life.

And in the English Church, that he loved so well, St. Thomas of Canterbury is again

revered, and on his Feast Day, English men and English women do not forget to pray:

O God, Who for Thy Church's sake didst suffer Thy Bishop Saint Thomas gloriously to be slain by the swords of wicked men: grant, we beseech Thee, that all they who call upon him for succour may be profited by the obtaining of all that they desire.

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